

THE BIBLE

TORAH

The Torah is the holiest book in the Jewish library since, according to tradition, it was written by Moses and contains the revelation of God's laws. In addition to its legal codes, it provides the primordial history of Israel, from its patriarchal origins through its escape from Egyptian slavery and its formation as a nation as its people traveled through the Sinai desert. The Torah is divided into weekly portions that are read in a yearlong cycle in the central ceremony of the synagogue liturgy.

GENESIS

The Book of Genesis starts with the creation of the world and of the human race. There are elements of the creation story borrowed from ancient Near Eastern myths, but the Bible characteristically strips them of their mythic features. The Bible shares with the Mesopotamian myths the belief that water was the primordial substance. But while the sea (*yam*) referred to in chapter 1 is the goddess Tiamat in Mesopotamian mythology (see p. 79), in Genesis it appears only as an aspect of nature under God's dominion. Whereas in the ancient mythology, the process of creation involves complex relations between different gods, the Bible's monotheism excludes any mention of other gods or, for that matter, any information about God himself. Instead, his motives and actions opaque, God creates the world by himself.

The Bible really contains two accounts of creation, in chapters 1 and 2. The first describes creation starting with the physical universe, then moving up a great chain of being from lower forms of life to animals, and culminating with man and woman. Interestingly, man and woman are created as equal, both in the image of God (rabbinic legend held that first God created an androgyne and later separated this primordial creature into the two sexes). In the second account, before the creation of the plants, man, here called Adam, is created, followed by plants, the animals, and only then woman, taken from Adam's rib, to be Adam's companion. The story is androcentric (emphasizing masculine interests), rather than synoptic (affording a comprehensive view), as in the first account. Another difference between the two is that the name of God in the first is Elohim and, in the second, Yahweh. Most scholars believe that the use of different divine names suggests different authors with different theologies. For example, in the second creation story, God is humanized (he walks in the Garden of Eden toward evening), while in the first, he is transcendent, hovering above his creation.

The first eleven chapters of Genesis deal with human history as a whole, but by chapter 12, the Bible narrows its focus to the history of one people, the descendants of Abram (soon to be renamed Abraham). The story begins with God's call to Abram

to abandon his ancestral home in Haran in western Mesopotamia and to migrate to the land that God will show him. Thus, the Covenant between Abraham and God is inextricably bound up with this new land. In chapter 17, God makes one of several covenants with Abraham, promising him kings and progeny who will be as numerous as the stars in the heavens. Scholars believe that, because of the mention of kings and the unconditional nature of this covenant, this text may have been written in the court of King David (or his successors) as a way of legitimating their reign.

Genesis 17 also contains the first mention of circumcision (the cutting off of the foreskin of a male) as a ritual that constitutes the Covenant (indeed, in later Judaism, circumcision will be called the "sign of the Covenant"). Circumcision is a puzzling ritual. If it is a sign that distinguishes one people from another, it is a strange one since it is typically not visible. Moreover, many peoples practiced circumcision in the ancient Near East (the circumcision of Ishmael, ancestor of the Arabs, is mentioned in Genesis itself). We know that priests in ancient Egypt were circumcised, and the Bible itself admits that circumcision was commonly practiced because it goes out of its way to single out the Philistines, who came from the Greek islands, as the "uncircumcised." The Greeks, too, did not practice circumcision. So, it is probable that circumcision was originally a widespread fertility ritual that came to be an ethnic marker only later, perhaps as late as Hellenistic times (after Alexander the Great's death in 323 B.C.E.), when male nudity in public baths became common. The Israelite innovation may have been to move the ritual from puberty to the eighth day.

In Genesis 22, the so-called "binding of Isaac," God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac and then substitutes a ram at the last minute. This is a highly mysterious passage because shortly before, God had promised Abraham that Isaac would carry on Abraham's legacy. Abraham's unspoken submission to God's will is considered by Jewish tradition to be a sign of his faith in God. This difficult passage would also serve as the inspiration for later Jews faced with persecutions.

Genesis 38 tells the strange story of Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar. Since Judah's sons are unable or unwilling to provide her with children, she dresses up as a prostitute and seduces Judah himself. Their son continues the lineage that will ultimately produce King David, the most important figure in Israel's history. Tamar, therefore, violates the Bible's own laws governing sexuality for the sake of procreation—in this case, to make possible the birth of the founder of the kingdom of Judah. Women play this role a number of times in the Bible, which demonstrates that biblical culture was more complicated when it came to sexuality and the status of women than one might assume from reading only the laws.

PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Adonai-yireh: <i>ah-doh'-nahy-yeer'-eh</i>	Havilah: <i>chah-vee'-la</i> [guttural <i>ch</i>]
Adullamite: <i>ah-dool'-uh-mite</i>	Hirah: <i>chee'-ra</i> [guttural <i>ch</i>]
Asshur: <i>ah'-sure</i>	Moriah: <i>mo-rah'y'-ah</i>
Beer-sheba: <i>beh-air'-sheh'-buh</i>	Onan: <i>oh'-nahn</i>
Canaan: <i>kay'-nan</i>	Perez: <i>peh-retz'</i>
Chezib: <i>ch eh-zeeb'</i> [guttural <i>ch</i> as in <i>Bach</i>]	Pishon: <i>pee'-shown</i>
Cush: <i>koosh</i>	Sarai: <i>sa-rah'y'</i>
Eden: <i>ee'-den</i>	Shelah: <i>shay'-lah</i>
El Shaddai: <i>el shah-dahy</i>	Shua: <i>shoo'-ah</i>
Enaim: <i>ahy-nahy-im'</i>	Tamar: <i>tuh-mar'</i>
Er: <i>air</i>	Tigris: <i>tahy'-gris</i>
Euphrates: <i>you-frey'-teez</i>	Timnah: <i>tim'-nah</i>
Gihon: <i>gee-chon'</i> [hard <i>g</i> as in <i>girl</i> ; guttural <i>ch</i>]	Zerah: <i>zeh'-rach</i> [guttural <i>ch</i>]

[GOD'S WORK OF CREATION]

(1) When God began to create heaven and earth—(2) the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—(3) God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. (4) God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. (5) God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.

(6) God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, that it may separate water from water." (7) God made the expanse, and it separated the water which was below the expanse from the water which was above the expanse. And it was so. (8) God called the expanse Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

(9) God said, "Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area, that the dry land may appear." And it was so. (10) God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering of waters He called Seas. And God saw that this was good. (11) And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. (12) The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that this was good. (13) And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

(14) God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years; (15) and they shall serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth." And it was so. (16) God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars. (17) And God set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, (18) to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that this was good. (19) And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

(20) God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and birds that fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." (21) God created the great sea monsters, and all the living creatures of every kind that creep, which the waters brought forth in swarms, and all the winged birds of every kind. And God saw that this was good. (22) God blessed them, saying, "Be fertile and increase, fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." (23) And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

(24) God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind." And it was so. (25) God made wild beasts of every kind and cattle of every kind, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. And God saw that this was good. (26) And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." (27) And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (28) God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase,

fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth."

(29) God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. (30) And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food." And it was so. (31) And God saw all that He had made, and found it very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

[ADAM AND EVE IN EDEN]

(1) The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. (2) On the seventh day God finished the work that He had been doing, and He ceased¹ on the seventh day from all the work that He had done. (3) And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done. (4) Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created.

When the Lord God made earth and heaven—(5) when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil, (6) but a flow would well up from the ground and water the whole surface of the earth—(7) the Lord God formed man² from the dust of the earth.³ He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.

(8) The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom He had formed. (9) And from the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and bad.

(10) A river issues from Eden to water the garden, and it then divides and becomes four branches. (11) The name of the first is Pishon, the one that winds through the whole land of Havilah, where the gold is. ((12) The gold of that land is good; bdellium is there, and lapis lazuli.)⁴ (13) The name of the second river is Gihon, the one that winds through the whole land of Cush. (14) The name of the third river is Tigris, the one that flows east of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

(15) The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, to till it and tend it. (16) And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; (17) but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die."

1. I.e., "rested." God's resting on the seventh day is the source of the Sabbath, the day of rest.

2. *Adam* (Hebrew).

3. Many Hebrew feminine nouns end in *-ah*. *Adamah*, the Hebrew word for "soil" or "ground," thus looks as if it ought to be the female counterpart to

adam, meaning "man." Rabbinic interpretation would later interpret this wordplay to mean that man is made from the feminine version of his essence, just as woman is made from man's essence.

4. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

(18) The Lord God said, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a fitting helper for him." (19) And the Lord God formed out of the earth all the wild beasts and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that would be its name. (20) And the man gave names to all the cattle and to the birds of the sky and to all the wild beasts; but for Adam no fitting helper was found. (21) So the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon the man; and, while he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that spot. (22) And the Lord God fashioned the rib that He had taken from the man into a woman; and He brought her to the man. (23) Then the man said,

"This one at last
Is bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh.
This one shall be called Woman,⁵
For from man⁶ was she taken."

(24) Hence a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, so that they become one flesh.

12:1-3

[GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAM]

(1) The Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you.

(2) I will make of you a great nation,
And I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
And you shall be a blessing.

(3) I will bless those who bless you
And curse him that curses you;
And all the families of the earth
Shall bless themselves by you."

* * *

17

[THE RITE OF CIRCUMCISION INSTITUTED]

(1) When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am El Shaddai.¹ Walk in My ways and be blameless. (2) I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will make you exceedingly numerous."

(3) Abram threw himself on his face; and God spoke to him further, (4) "As for Me, this is My covenant with you: You shall be the father of a multitude of nations. (5) And you shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham,² for I make you the father of a multitude of nations. (6) I

5. *Isha* (feminine of *ish*, "man"). *Ishsha*, with a doubling of the Hebrew letter for *sh*, means "her husband." The wordplay thus links the Hebrew word for "woman" to the man to whom she is sexually connected.
6. *Ish* (Hebrew).

1. A divine name associated with the priestly author. The name is frequently associated with fertility and may derive from the Hebrew for "breasts" (*shadayim*).
2. "Father of a multitude."

will make you exceedingly fertile, and make nations of you; and kings shall come forth from you. (7) I will maintain My covenant between Me and you, and your offspring to come, as an everlasting covenant throughout the ages, to be God to you and to your offspring to come. (8) I assign the land you sojourn in to you and your offspring to come, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting holding. I will be their God."

(9) God further said to Abraham, "As for you, you and your offspring to come throughout the ages shall keep My covenant. (10) Such shall be the covenant between Me and you and your offspring to follow which you shall keep: every male among you shall be circumcised. (11) You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and that shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. (12) And throughout the generations, every male among you shall be circumcised at the age of eight days. As for the homeborn slave and the one bought from an outsider who is not of your offspring, (13) they must be circumcised, homeborn and purchased alike. Thus shall My covenant be marked in your flesh as an everlasting pact. (14) And if any male who is uncircumcised fails to circumcise the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his kin; he has broken My covenant."

(15) And God said to Abraham, "As for your wife Sarai, you shall not call her Sarai, but her name shall be Sarah.³ (16) I will bless her; indeed, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she shall give rise to nations; rulers of peoples shall issue from her." (17) Abraham threw himself on his face and laughed, as he said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man a hundred years old, or can Sarah bear a child at ninety?" (18) And Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael⁴ might live by Your favor!" (19) God said, "Nevertheless, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac;⁵ and I will maintain My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring to come. (20) As for Ishmael, I have heeded you.⁶ I hereby bless him. I will make him fertile and exceedingly numerous. He shall be the father of twelve chieftains, and I will make of him a great nation. (21) But My covenant I will maintain with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year." (22) And when He was done speaking with him, God was gone from Abraham.

(23) Then Abraham took his son Ishmael, and all his homeborn slaves and all those he had bought, every male in Abraham's household, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins on that very day, as God had spoken to him. (24) Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he circumcised the flesh of his foreskin, (25) and his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. (26) Thus Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised on that very day; (27) and all his household, his homeborn slaves and those that had been bought from outsiders, were circumcised with him.

3. "Princess" (*sar* means a ruler).

4. The outcast son of Abraham and Hagar.

5. *Yitzhak* (Hebrew): "he will laugh."

6. "God will hear" or "God will heed."

[THE BIRTH OF ISAAC; THE EXPULSION OF HAGAR]

(1) Some time afterward, God put Abraham to the test. He said to him, "Abraham," and he answered, "Here I am." (2) And He said, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah,¹ and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you." (3) So early next morning, Abraham saddled his ass and took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and he set out for the place of which God had told him. (4) On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place from afar. (5) Then Abraham said to his servants, "You stay here with the ass. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you."

(6) Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. He himself took the firestone² and the knife; and the two walked off together. (7) Then Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he answered, "Yes, my son." And he said, "Here are the firestone and the wood; but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" (8) And Abraham said, "God will see to the sheep for His burnt offering, my son." And the two of them walked on together.

(9) They arrived at the place of which God had told him. Abraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood; he bound his son Isaac; he laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. (10) And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son. (11) Then an angel of the Lord called to him from heaven: "Abraham! Abraham!" And he answered, "Here I am." (12) And he said, "Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me." (13) When Abraham looked up, his eye fell upon a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. (14) And Abraham named that site Adonai-yireh, whence the present saying, "On the mount of the Lord there is vision."

(15) The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, (16) and said, "By Myself I swear, the Lord declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one, (17) I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore; and your descendants shall seize the gates of their foes. (18) All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed My command." (19) Abraham then returned to his servants, and they departed together for Beer-sheba; and Abraham stayed in Beer-sheba.

* * *

1. Associated by tradition with the site of the future Temple.

2. I.e., flint.

[JUDAH'S HOUSEHOLD TROUBLES]

(1) About that time Judah left his brothers and camped near a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah. (2) There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua, and he married her and cohabited with her. (3) She conceived and bore a son, and he named him Er. (4) She conceived again and bore a son, and named him Onan. (5) Once again she bore a son, and named him Shelah; he was at Chezib when she bore him.

(6) Judah got a wife for Er his first-born; her name was Tamar. (7) But Er, Judah's first-born, was displeasing to the Lord, and the Lord took his life. (8) Then Judah said to Onan, "Join with your brother's wife and do your duty by her as a brother-in-law,¹ and provide offspring for your brother." (9) But Onan, knowing that the seed would not count as his, let it go to waste whenever he joined with his brother's wife, so as not to provide offspring for his brother. (10) What he did was displeasing to the Lord, and He took his life also. (11) Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Stay as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up"—for he thought, "He too might die like his brothers." So Tamar went to live in her father's house.

(12) A long time afterward, Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died. When his period of mourning was over, Judah went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, together with his friend Hirah the Adullamite. (13) And Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is coming up to Timnah for the sheepshearing." (14) So she took off her widow's garb, covered her face with a veil, and, wrapping herself up, sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown up, yet she had not been given to him as wife. (15) When Judah saw her, he took her for a harlot; for she had covered her face. (16) So he turned aside to her by the road and said, "Here, let me sleep with you"—for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. "What," she asked, "will you pay for sleeping with me?" (17) He replied, "I will send a kid from my flock." But she said, "You must leave a pledge until you have sent it." (18) And he said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your seal and cord; and the staff which you carry." So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she conceived by him. (19) Then she went on her way. She took off her veil and again put on her widow's garb.

(20) Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite, to redeem the pledge from the woman; but he could not find her. (21) He inquired of the people of that town, "Where is the cult prostitute,² the one at Enaim, by the road?" But they said, "There has been no prostitute here." (22) So he returned to Judah and said, "I could not find her; moreover, the townspeople said: There has been no prostitute here." (23) Judah said, "Let her keep them,³ lest we become a laughingstock. I did send her this kid, but you did not find her."

(24) About three months later, Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot; in fact, she is with child by harlotry." "Bring her

1. Biblical law (Deuteronomy 25:5) requires that if a man dies and has no offspring, his younger brother is obliged to marry his widow unless she performs a ceremony to release him from this leviratic duty. Judah's second son, Onan, did

not fulfill this duty, and Judah did not give his daughter-in-law, Tamar, to his third son, Shelah.

2. A person who is devoted to a fertility deity and who dedicates her/his earning to that deity.

3. I.e., Judah's seal, cord, and staff.

out," said Judah, "and let her be burned." (25) As she was being brought out, she sent this message to her father-in-law, "I am with child by the man to whom these belong." And she added, "Examine these: whose seal and cord and staff are these?" (26) Judah recognized them, and said, "She is more in the right than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he was not intimate with her again.

(27) When the time came for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb! (28) While she was in labor, one of them put out his hand, and the midwife tied a crimson thread on that hand, to signify: This one came out first. (29) But just then he drew back his hand, and out came his brother; and she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" So he was named Perez.⁴ (30) Afterward his brother came out, on whose hand was the crimson thread; he was named Zerah.⁵

4. Meaning "to break through."

5. A reference to the sunrise, which initially is red, like the crimson thread.

EXODUS

Unlike Genesis, which relates accounts of small, seminomadic tribes, Exodus tells stories in which the Israelites have become in fact, if not in full consciousness, the size of a nation. They have become enslaved by the Egyptians and can only be freed by the combined efforts of God and Moses. The story of Moses reverses the conventional tale in the ancient Near East and elsewhere of the son of royalty cast out and raised by a lowly family (see the birth of Sargon, p. 81). Moses is, instead, the son of Israelite slaves, hidden in the bullrushes and then raised by Pharaoh's daughter. Some commentators (such as Sigmund Freud) have concluded that Moses was, in fact, an Egyptian, a speculation that receives some support from his Egyptian name. Either way, only this exceptional upbringing, the Bible implies, could prepare him for the task of mobilizing the Israelites to escape slavery and become a nation.

The exodus is celebrated by the holiday of Passover, described in Exodus 12 and 13. The holiday is quite possibly a spring-animal sacrifice combined with a week of ritually eating the *matzot*, or "unleavened bread." Some scholars have suggested that the first is a nomadic holiday, while the second is a holiday of agriculturalists who consumed the last of the previous year's harvest in preparation for the new harvest. The agricultural character of the holiday is grafted onto the memory of a crucial historical event in the life of the nation, the exodus from Egypt. This is typical of biblical holidays, which often combine agricultural feasts with historical remembrance. It is possible that the agricultural element was much more ancient, perhaps even going back to the pre-Israelite Canaanites. The Israelites may have adopted these holidays but added the historical dimension to them.

Exodus 15 contains one of the oldest layers of text in the Bible, the Song of the Sea, which celebrates the crossing of the Sea of Reeds (the correct meaning of what is usually translated "Red Sea") and God's spectacular drowning of the pursuing Egyptian army. God is portrayed here as a "Warrior" (15:3). A second poem in Exodus 15 is sung by a woman (Moses' sister, Miriam). Certain passages from this poem made their way much later into the daily liturgy. These poems are good examples of biblical poetry (similar early songs are the poem at the end of the Deuteronomy and the Song of Deborah in Judges 5).

The last part of chapter 15 contains the first instance of the Israelites complaining about Moses, a theme that recurs several times in Numbers, where they demand to return to the "flesh pots" or meat stews of Egypt. Most famously, they create a golden calf to worship while Moses is alone with God on Mount Sinai. Despite the earth-shattering nature of both the miraculous exodus and the awesome revelation at Sinai, the Israelites repeatedly lose heart and rebel against God and Moses. These episodes of rebellion and reproof foreshadow many episodes in later Israelite history of failure to obey God's law, necessitating repeated interventions by God and his prophets. Few national histories contain so many stories that reflect self-critically on the nation and its character.

The exodus from Egypt is really only a prelude to the great revelation at Mount Sinai. It is here that God, who has just liberated the people from slavery, makes a covenant with them and gives them the code of his law. Primary among these laws are the Ten Commandments, although the Bible never labels them as such. There are, in fact, other versions of the Decalogue: Deuteronomy 5:6-18, which is very close to Exodus's Ten Commandments, but also Exodus 34:14-26, which is presented as a new covenant to take the place of the tablets that Moses broke in response to the golden calf. This second Decalogue, focused on issues of land and pilgrimage holidays, seems more suited to a settled agricultural people than does the more famous Ten Commandments of Exodus 20.

According to later tradition, God gave the whole Torah (first five books of the Bible) at Sinai (and, according to the later rabbis, he also gave the oral law—that is, rabbinic literature). The very last line of Leviticus (27:34) specifically says, "These are the commandments that the Lord gave Moses for the Israelite people on Mount Sinai." But it would appear from the text itself that he only gave the Ten Commandments and the so-called Book of the Covenant (Exodus 21-23, the laws that immediately follow the Ten Commandments). Either way, the revelation at Sinai is the foundational event of the Jewish religion.

The narrative of the wandering in the desert, with its repeated rebellions against God and Moses, continues in the Book of Numbers (not represented here), which, like Exodus, includes a great deal of legal material, mostly from priestly sources.

PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Abib: <i>ah-veev'</i>	Midian: <i>mih'-dee-ahn</i>
Canaanites: <i>kay'-na-nites</i>	Perizzites: <i>peh-ree'-zites</i>
Edom: <i>eh'-dome</i>	Philistia: <i>fih-lis-tee'-uh</i>
Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh: <i>eh-yeh'-ah-shayr'-eh-yeh'</i>	Pithom: <i>pih'-tohm</i>
Gershom: <i>gehr'-shome</i> [hard g as in <i>girl</i>]	Puah: <i>poo-ah'</i>
Hivites: <i>hee'-vites</i>	Raamses: <i>ram'-seez</i>
Horeb: <i>hoh'-reb</i>	Rephidim: <i>reh'-fee-dim</i>
Issachar: <i>i-sah'-kahr</i>	Reuel: <i>reh-oo'-ale</i>
Jebusites: <i>jeh-boo'-zites</i>	Shiphrah: <i>shif'-rah</i>
Levi: <i>lay'-vee</i>	Zebulun: <i>zeh-vu'-lin</i>
	Zipporah: <i>tzi-po'-rah</i>

I

[THE OPPRESSION OF ISRAEL'S DESCENDANTS]

(1) These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each coming with his household: (2) Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah;

(3) Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; (4) Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. (5) The total number of persons that were of Jacob's issue came to seventy, Joseph being already in Egypt. (6) Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation. (7) But the Israelites were fertile and prolific; they multiplied and increased very greatly, so that the land was filled with them.

(8) A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. (9) And he said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. (10) Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise in the event of war they may join our enemies in fighting against us and rise from the ground."¹ (11) So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor; and they built garrison cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Raamses. (12) But the more they were oppressed, the more they increased and spread out, so that the [Egyptians] came to dread the Israelites.

(13) The Egyptians ruthlessly imposed upon the Israelites (14) the various labors that they made them perform. Ruthlessly they made life bitter for them with harsh labor at mortar and bricks and with all sorts of tasks in the field.

(15) The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, (16) saying, "When you deliver the Hebrew women, look at the birthstool: if it is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live." (17) The midwives, fearing God, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live. (18) So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing, letting the boys live?" (19) The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women: they are vigorous. Before the midwife can come to them, they have given birth." (20) And God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and increased greatly. (21) And because the midwives feared God, He established households for them. (22) Then Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, "Every boy that is born you shall throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."

2

[THE BIRTH OF MOSES; MOSES FLEES EGYPT]

(1) A certain man of the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. (2) The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw how beautiful he was, she hid him for three months. (3) When she could hide him no longer, she got a wicker basket for him and caulked it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child into it and placed it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. (4) And his sister stationed herself at a distance, to learn what would befall him.

(5) The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the Nile, while her maidens walked along the Nile. She spied the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to fetch it. (6) When she opened it, she saw that it was a child, a boy crying. She took pity on it and said, "This must be a Hebrew child." (7) Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you

1. I.e., from their lowly state.

a Hebrew nurse to suckle the child for you?" (8) And Pharaoh's daughter answered, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. (9) And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. (10) When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who made him her son. She named him Moses,¹ explaining, "I drew him out of the water."

(11) Some time after that, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his kinsfolk and witnessed their labors. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsmen. (12) He turned this way and that and, seeing no one about, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. (13) When he went out the next day, he found two Hebrews fighting; so he said to the offender, "Why do you strike your fellow?" (14) He retorted, "Who made you chief and ruler over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Moses was frightened, and thought: Then the matter is known! (15) When Pharaoh learned of the matter, he sought to kill Moses; but Moses fled from Pharaoh. He arrived in the land of Midian,² and sat down beside a well.

(16) Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came to draw water, and filled the troughs to water their fathers flock; (17) but shepherds came and drove them off. Moses rose to their defense, and he watered their flock. (18) When they returned to their father Reuel,³ he said, "How is it that you have come back so soon today?" (19) They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds; he even drew water for us and watered the flock." (20) He said to his daughters, "Where is he then? Why did you leave the man? Ask him in to break bread." (21) Moses consented to stay with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah as wife. (22) She bore a son whom he named Gershom, for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

(23) A long time after that, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites were groaning under the bondage and cried out; and their cry for help from the bondage rose up to God. (24) God heard their moaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. (25) God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

3

[MOSES IS CHARGED BY GOD TO DELIVER ISRAEL OUT OF BONDAGE]

(1) Now Moses, tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.¹ (2) An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed. (3) Moses said, "I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn't the bush burn up?" (4) When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: "Moses! Moses!" He answered,

1. Hebrew etymology from "to draw out." The name is, however, attested in Egyptian, where it means "born of."

2. In some places (e.g., Numbers 31), the Midianites are enemies of the Israelites. But here they appear as kinsmen by marriage (in Genesis 25,

Midian is the son of Abraham and his concubine, Keturah).

3. Elsewhere (Exodus 3 and 18), Moses' father-in-law is named Jethro. Perhaps two separate sources are combined here.

1. Traditionally considered to be Mount Sinai.

"Here I am." (5) And He said, "Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. (6) I am," He said, "the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

(7) And the Lord continued, "I have marked well the plight of My people in Egypt and have heeded their outcry because of their taskmasters; yes, I am mindful of their sufferings. (8) I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the region of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. (9) Now the cry of the Israelites has reached Me; moreover, I have seen how the Egyptians oppress them. (10) Come, therefore, I will send you to Pharaoh, and you shall free My people, the Israelites, from Egypt."

(11) But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?" (12) And He said, "I will be with you; that shall be your sign that it was I who sent you. And when you have freed the people from Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

(13) Moses said to God, "When I come to the Israelites and say to them 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" (14) And God said to Moses, "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh."² He continued, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites, 'Ehyeh sent me to you.'" (15) And God said further to Moses, "Thus shall you speak to the Israelites: The Lord,³ the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you:

This shall be My name forever,

This My appellation for all eternity.

(16) "Go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them: the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,⁴ has appeared to me and said, 'I have taken note of you and of what is being done to you in Egypt, (17) and I have declared: I will take you out of the misery of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.' (18) They will listen to you; then you shall go with the elders of Israel to the king of Egypt and you shall say to him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, manifested Himself to us. Now therefore, let us go a distance of three days into the wilderness to sacrifice to the Lord our God.' (19) Yet I know that the king of Egypt will let you go only because of a greater might. (20) So I will stretch out My hand and smite Egypt with various wonders which I will work upon them; after that he shall let you go. (21) And I will dispose the Egyptians favorably toward this people, so that when you go, you will not go away empty-handed. (22) Each woman shall borrow from her neighbor and the lodger in her house objects of silver and gold, and clothing, and you shall put these on your sons and daughters, thus stripping the Egyptians."

2. Literally, "I am what I am" or "I will be what I will be."

3. Literally, the letters YHWH, frequently vocalized *Yahweh* (from the verb "to be"). This essential, four-letter name of God (tetragrammaton) is

not pronounced in the Jewish tradition, which substitutes "the Lord" (*Adonai*) for it.

4. The new name of God is associated with the ancient God of the Genesis patriarchs.

13:1-10

[THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT]

(1) The Lord spoke further to Moses, saying, (2) "Consecrate to Me every first-born; man and beast, the first issue of every womb among the Israelites is Mine."

(3) And Moses said to the people,

"Remember this day, on which you went free from Egypt, the house of bondage, how the Lord freed you from it with a mighty hand: no leavened bread shall be eaten. (4) You go free on this day, in the month of Abib.¹ (5) So, when the Lord has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall observe in this month the following practice:

(6) "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival of the Lord. (7) Throughout the seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten; no leavened bread shall be found with you, and no leaven shall be found in all your territory. (8) And you shall explain to your son on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went free from Egypt.'

(9) "And this shall serve you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead—in order that the Teaching of the Lord may be in your mouth—that with a mighty hand the Lord freed you from Egypt. (10) You shall keep this institution at its set time from year to year."²

* * *

15:1-21

[A SONG OF DELIVERANCE]

(1) Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord. They said:

I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously;
Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea.

(2) The Lord¹ is my strength and might;
He is become my deliverance.

This is my God and I will enshrine Him;
The God of my father, and I will exalt Him.

(3) The Lord, the Warrior—
Lord is His name!

(4) Pharaoh's chariots and his army
He has cast into the sea;

And the pick of his officers
Are drowned in the Sea of Reeds.

(5) The deeps covered them;
They went down into the depths like a stone.

1. The ancient name (possibly Canaanite) of the first month of spring (in later Hebrew, *Abib* means "spring").

2. This version of the law of the Passover does not include sacrifice (see Exodus 12:21). Since, after

the destruction of the two Temples, sacrifice became impossible, it is this version, focused on eating unleavened bread and recounting the story of the Exodus, that pertains today.

1. In Hebrew, *Ya*, an abbreviation for *Yahweh*.

(6) Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power.
Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the foe!
(7) In Your great triumph You break Your opponents;
You send forth Your fury, it consumes them like straw.
(8) At the blast of Your nostrils the waters piled up.
The floods stood straight like a wall;
The deeps froze in the heart of the sea.
(9) The foe said,
"I will pursue, I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil;
My desire shall have its fill of them.
I will bare my sword—
My hand shall subdue them."
(10) You made Your wind blow, the sea covered them;
They sank like lead in the majestic waters.

(11) Who is like You, O Lord, among the celestials;²
Who is like You, majestic in holiness,
Awesome in splendor, working wonders!
(12) You put out Your right hand,
The earth swallowed them.
(13) In Your love You lead the people You redeemed;
In Your strength You guide them to Your holy abode.
(14) The peoples hear, they tremble;
Agony grips the dwellers in Philistia.
(15) Now are the clans of Edom dismayed;
The tribes of Moab—trembling grips them;
All the dwellers in Canaan are aghast.
(16) Terror and dread descend upon them;
Through the might of Your arm they are still as stone—
Till Your people cross over, O Lord,
Till Your people cross whom You have ransomed.

(17) You will bring them and plant them in Your own mountain,
The place You made to dwell in, O Lord,
The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands established.
(18) The Lord will reign for ever and ever!

(19) For the horses of Pharaoh, with his chariots and horsemen, went into the sea; and the Lord turned back on them the waters of the sea; but the Israelites marched on dry ground in the midst of the sea.

(20) Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel³ in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with timbrels. (21) And Miriam chanted for them:

Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously;
Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea.

* * *

2. In Hebrew, *elim* can mean "mighty ones" or "gods."
3. I.e., tambourine.

[GOD SPEAKS TO MOSES ON MOUNT SINAI]

(1) On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone forth from the land of Egypt, on that very day, they entered the wilderness of Sinai. (2) Having journeyed from Rephidim, they entered the wilderness of Sinai and encamped in the wilderness. Israel encamped there in front of the mountain, (3) and Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel: (4) 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me. (5) Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, (6) but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel."

(7) Moses came and summoned the elders of the people and put before them all that the Lord had commanded him. (8) All the people answered as one, saying, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the people's words to the Lord. (9) And the Lord said to Moses, "I will come to you in a thick cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after." Then Moses reported the people's words to the Lord, (10) and the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and warn them to stay pure¹ today and tomorrow. Let them wash their clothes. (11) Let them be ready for the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come down, in the sight of all the people, on Mount Sinai. (12) You shall set bounds for the people round about, saying, 'Beware of going up the mountain or touching the border of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death: (13) no hand shall touch him, but he shall be either stoned or shot; beast or man, he shall not live.' When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they may go up on the mountain."

(14) Moses came down from the mountain to the people and warned the people to stay pure, and they washed their clothes. (15) And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day: do not go near a woman."

(16) On the third day, as morning dawned, there was thunder, and lightning, and a dense cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud blast of the horn; and all the people who were in the camp trembled. (17) Moses led the people out of the camp toward God, and they took their places at the foot of the mountain.

(18) Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for the Lord had come down upon it in fire; the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently. (19) The blare of the horn grew louder and louder. As Moses spoke, God answered him in thunder. (20) The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain, and the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain and Moses went up. (21) The Lord said to Moses, "Go

1. Refrain from sexual relations (see 19:15), which render both parties temporarily impure (see Leviticus 15).

down, warn the people not to break through to the Lord to gaze, lest many of them perish. (22) The priests also, who come near the Lord, must stay pure, lest the Lord break out against them." (23) But Moses said to the Lord, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for You warned us saying, 'Set bounds about the mountain and sanctify it.'" (24) So the Lord said to him, "Go down, and come back together with Aaron; but let not the priests or the people break through to come up to the Lord, lest He break out against them." (25) And Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

20

[THE TEN COMMANDMENTS]

(1) God spoke all these words, saying:

(2) I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage: (3) You shall have no other gods besides Me.

(4) You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. (5) You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the Lord your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, (6) but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

(7) You shall not swear falsely by the name of the Lord your God; for the Lord will not clear one who swears falsely by His name.

(8) Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. (9) Six days you shall labor and do all your work, (10) but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God: you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements. (11) For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

(12) Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land that the Lord your God is assigning to you.

(13) You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

(14) You shall not covet your neighbor's house: you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

(15) All the people witnessed¹ the thunder and lightning, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they fell back and stood at a distance. (16) "You speak to us," they said to Moses, "and we will obey; but let not God speak to us, lest we die." (17) Moses answered the people, "Be not afraid; for God has come only in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may be ever with you, so that you do not go

1. Literally, "saw the voices."

astray." (18) So the people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.

(19) The Lord said to Moses:

Thus shall you say to the Israelites: You yourselves saw that I spoke to you from the very heavens: (20) With Me, therefore, you shall not make any gods of silver, nor shall you make for yourselves any gods of gold. (21) Make for Me an altar of earth and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your sacrifices of well-being,² your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come to you and bless you. (22) And if you make for Me an altar of stones, do not build it of hewn stones; for by wielding your tool upon them you have profaned them. (23) Do not ascend My altar by steps, that your nakedness may not be exposed upon it.

2. One type of sacrifice.

LEVITICUS

The Book of Leviticus (from *Levite*, the priestly tribe descended from Jacob's son Levi) deals with the many technical laws of sacrifice and of the priesthood. It also includes some of the important legal codes pertaining to nonliturgical behavior, such as the laws of proper sexual conduct. Scholars divide the book into two sources. Chapters 1–16 are called the Priestly Code (or P), and these contain the sacrificial laws as well as the dietary (*kashrut*) laws and the law of the Day of Atonement (or Yom Kippur). Chapters 17–27 are called the Holiness Code (or H), and here we find prescriptions for moral conduct, but also within the context of a religion of sacrifice. Here, for example, are the prohibitions on eating meat with blood still in it as well as on incest and certain homosexual acts.

The dating of these two strands of Leviticus remains controversial. From the nineteenth century until quite recently, it was assumed that P came from the Second Temple period, thus reflecting a very late layer of the Bible. But more recent scholars have argued that P was written during the First Temple period, possibly in the eighth century B.C.E., with H coming later but also while the First Temple still stood.

Leviticus 9 describes four kinds of sacrifices: the sin offering of a male goat; the "burnt offering" (the Hebrew term is *olah*, an offering that "rises up" to heaven in smoke because it has been completely burned) of a calf and a lamb; the meal offering of grain with oil mixed in it; and the well-being offering (*shelamim*, meaning "peace offerings") of an ox and a ram. Note how proper sacrifice required disposal of the blood of the animals on the altar, perhaps symbolizing the return of this "life substance" to God.

The sacrifices were the primary way that the ancient Israelites communicated with God on a daily basis. As verse 6 says, following the laws of sacrifice ensures that "the Presence [or "Glory"] of the Lord may appear to you." At the end of the chapter, the people behold God's presence in the form of a fire from heaven that consumes the offering.

Leviticus 23, from the Holiness Code, is one of several sacred calendars found in the Bible. The Sabbath, referred to not only in the Ten Commandments, but also in Genesis 2 (see p. 85)—another text thought to have been written by priests—is the

first entry in the calendar. The calendar here is based on a spring date for the New Year. On the eve of the fifteenth day of the first month comes the double holiday of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (see Exodus 13, p. 95). Then come the Festival of Weeks; an unnamed holiday on the first day of the seventh month—it would later be called Rosh Hashana ("New Year"), when the calendar would be switched to a fall starting date; the Day of Atonement; and, finally, the holiday of Sukkot.

This calendar contains considerable detail about the sacrifices to be offered during the spring festivals, but also moral instruction: the edges of the fields must be left unharvested for "the poor and the stranger." Indeed, biblical law viewed the stranger—or alien resident—to be subject to the same laws as the Israelite. In numerous other places in the Torah (Exodus 22:20, 23:9, Leviticus 19:34, Deuteronomy 10:19), the Israelites are told to extend full rights to the stranger because they themselves were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Another interesting feature of this calendar is the way it combines agricultural holidays with historical remembrance. Thus, the autumn holiday of Sukkot marks the harvest of fruits, but one dwells in booths (the English translation of *Sukkot*) for a week to commemorate how the ancestors of the Israelites lived in the desert when they came out of Egypt (although, in reality, they lived in tents).

PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

hadar: *huh'-dar*hin: *heen*

9

[AARON OFFERS SACRIFICES TO GOD]

(1) On the eighth day Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel. (2) He said to Aaron: "Take a calf of the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, without blemish, and bring them before the Lord. (3) And speak to the Israelites, saying: Take a he-goat for a sin offering; a calf and a lamb, yearlings without blemish, for a burnt offering; (4) and an ox and a ram for an offering of well-being to sacrifice before the Lord; and a meal offering with oil mixed in. For today the Lord will appear to you."

(5) They brought to the front of the Tent of Meeting¹ the things that Moses had commanded, and the whole community came forward and stood before the Lord. (6) Moses said: "This is what the Lord has commanded that you do, that the Presence of the Lord may appear to you." (7) Then Moses said to Aaron: "Come forward to the altar and sacrifice your sin offering and your burnt offering,² making expiation for yourself and for the people; and sacrifice the people's offering and make expiation for them, as the Lord has commanded."

(8) Aaron came forward to the altar and slaughtered his calf of sin offering. (9) Aaron's sons brought the blood to him; he dipped his finger in the blood and put it on the horns³ of the altar; and he poured out the rest of

TRANSLATED BY Harry M. Orlinsky et al.

1. The portable cultic site in the desert period that serves as the model for cultic sites (including the Temple in Jerusalem) once the Israelites reach the land.

2. "Holocaust" ("whole-burnt") in the Greek trans-

lation.

3. I.e., projections on the corners of the altar (see Exodus 27:2). Blood from the sacrificial animal would have been applied to the horns to atone for sins (see Exodus 29:12).

the blood at the base of the altar. (10) The fat, the kidneys, and the protuberance of the liver from the sin offering he turned into smoke on the altar—as the Lord had commanded Moses; (11) and the flesh and the skin were consumed in fire outside the camp. (12) Then he slaughtered the burnt offering. Aaron's sons passed the blood to him, and he dashed it against all sides of the altar. (13) They passed the burnt offering to him in sections, as well as the head, and he turned it into smoke on the altar. (14) He washed the entrails and the legs, and turned them into smoke on the altar with the burnt offering.

(15) Next he brought forward the people's offering. He took the goat for the people's sin offering, and slaughtered it, and presented it as a sin offering like the previous one. (16) He brought forward the burnt offering and sacrificed it according to regulation. (17) He then brought forward the meal offering and, taking a handful of it, he turned it into smoke on the altar—in addition to the burnt offering of the morning. (18) He slaughtered the ox and the ram, the people's sacrifice of well-being. Aaron's sons passed the blood to him—which he dashed against every side of the altar—(19) and the fat parts of the ox and the ram: the broad tail, the covering [fat], the kidneys, and the protuberances of the livers. (20) They laid these fat parts over the breasts; and Aaron turned the fat parts into smoke on the altar, (21) and elevated the breasts and the right thighs as an elevation offering before the Lord—as Moses had commanded.

(22) Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them; and he stepped down after offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the offering of well-being. (23) Moses and Aaron then went inside the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the Presence of the Lord appeared to all the people. (24) Fire came forth from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat parts on the altar. And all the people saw, and shouted, and fell on their faces.

23

[HOLIDAY LAWS]

(1) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: (2) Speak to the Israelite people and say to them:

These are My fixed times, the fixed times of the Lord, which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions.

(3) On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a sabbath of complete rest, a sacred occasion. You shall do no work; it shall be a sabbath of the Lord throughout your settlements.

(4) These are the set times of the Lord, the sacred occasions, which you shall celebrate each at its appointed time: (5) In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to the Lord, (6) and on the fifteenth day of that month the Lord's Feast of Unleavened Bread. You shall eat unleavened bread for seven days. (7) On the first day you shall celebrate a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. (8) Seven days you shall make offerings by fire to the Lord. The seventh day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations.

(9) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: (10) Speak to the Israelite people and say to them:

When you enter the land that I am giving to you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the first sheaf of your harvest to the priest.¹ (11) He shall elevate the sheaf before the Lord for acceptance in your behalf; the priest shall elevate it on the day after the sabbath. (12) On the day that you elevate the sheaf, you shall offer as a burnt offering to the Lord a lamb of the first year without blemish.² (13) The meal offering with it shall be two-tenths of a measure of choice flour with oil mixed in, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord; and the libation with it shall be of wine, a quarter of a *hin*.³ (14) Until that very day, until you have brought the offering of your God, you shall eat no bread or parched grain or fresh ears; it is a law for all time throughout the ages in all your settlements.

(15) And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering—the day after the sabbath—you shall count off seven weeks. They must be complete: (16) you must count until the day after the seventh week—fifty days; then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the Lord.⁴ (17) You shall bring from your settlements two loaves of bread as an elevation offering; each shall be made of two-tenths of a measure of choice flour, baked after leavening, as first fruits to the Lord. (18) With the bread you shall present, as burnt offerings to the Lord, seven yearling lambs without blemish, one bull of the herd, and two rams, with their meal offerings and libations, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord. (19) You shall also offer one he-goat as a sin offering and two yearling lambs as a sacrifice of well-being. (20) The priest shall elevate these—the two lambs—together with the bread of first fruits as an elevation offering before the Lord; they shall be holy to the Lord, for the priest. (21) On that same day you shall hold a celebration; it shall be a sacred occasion for you; you shall not work at your occupations. This is a law for all time in all your settlements, throughout the ages.

(22) And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Lord am your God.

(23) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: (24) Speak to the Israelite people thus: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts.⁵ (25) You shall not work at your occupations; and you shall bring an offering by fire to the Lord.

(26) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: (27) Mark, the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall practice self-denial,⁶ and you shall bring an offering by fire to the Lord; (28) you shall do no work throughout that day. For it is a Day of Atonement, on which expiation is made on your behalf before the Lord your God. (29) Indeed, any person who does not practice self-denial throughout

1. The agricultural festival corresponding to the Passover (see Exodus 13).

2. See Leviticus 9.

3. Approximately 1 gallon. (A *hin* is equivalent to about a quart.)

4. The holiday of Shavu'ot, associated by later tradition with the giving of the Torah at Sinai.

5. The holiday of the sounding of the shofar (ram's horn) in rabbinic literature became Rosh Hashana ("New Year"), when the beginning of the calendar shifted from spring to fall.

6. By fasting. (According to rabbinic law, one must partake of neither food nor drink.)

that day shall be cut off from his kin; (30) and whoever does any work throughout that day, I will cause that person to perish from among his people. (31) Do no work whatever; it is a law for all time, throughout the ages in all your settlements. (32) It shall be a sabbath of complete rest for you, and you shall practice self-denial; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall observe this your sabbath.

(33) The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: (34) Say to the Israelite people:

On the fifteenth day of this seventh month there shall be the Feast of Booths to the Lord, [to last] seven days. (35) The first day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations; (36) seven days you shall bring offerings by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall observe a sacred occasion and bring an offering by fire to the Lord; it is a solemn gathering: you shall not work at your occupations.

(37) Those are the set times of the Lord that you shall celebrate as sacred occasions, bringing offerings by fire to the Lord—burnt offerings, meal offerings, sacrifices, and libations, on each day what is proper to it—(38) apart from the sabbaths of the Lord, and apart from your gifts and from all your votive offerings and from all your freewill offerings that you give to the Lord.

(39) Mark, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month,⁷ when you have gathered in the yield of your land, you shall observe the festival of the Lord [to last] seven days: a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day. (40) On the first day you shall take the product of *hadar* trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. (41) You shall observe it as a festival of the Lord for seven days in the year; you shall observe it in the seventh month as a law for all time, throughout the ages. (42) You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, (43) in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the Lord your God.

(44) So Moses declared to the Israelites the set times of the Lord.

7. Repetition of verses 33–36, with additional agricultural and historical details, suggests that a second, perhaps later source was appended to the chapter.

DEUTERONOMY

The Book of Deuteronomy has a very different setting than the first four books of the Bible. Those books are arranged to give the history of the Israelites from their earliest origins through the wandering in the desert, in addition to a variety of law codes. Deuteronomy is in the form of a speech given by Moses just before his own death and the subsequent entry of the Israelites into the promised land. Scholars date this book to the late seventh century B.C.E., when King Josiah (640–609 B.C.E.) of the kingdom of Judah undertook a great reform (see 2 Kings 23, pp. 107–09).

According to the account in 2 Kings, renovations on the Temple uncovered a book that then became the blueprint for Josiah's reform. Since the details of the reform seem so close to the laws in Deuteronomy, it is assumed that the book uncovered there was Deuteronomy (although it may have been written decades earlier). In order to give the book antiquity—and, therefore, legitimacy—the authors attributed it to Moses (a practice called *pseudepigraphy*, or “falsely attributed writing”). This move was part of a general tendency in the late First Temple period to harken back with nostalgia to the by then ancient desert period.

Based on Deuteronomy's demand that Yahweh be worshipped only in Jerusalem, Josiah ordered all worship sites outside of the city destroyed and their priests banished. Some of these sites were dedicated to the Canaanite gods and goddesses, while others were for the worship of Yahweh himself. The centralization of worship commanded by Deuteronomy would tolerate neither. But the reform went further in suppressing various kinds of ritual practices in the Jerusalem Temple itself, including the use of objects dedicated to “Baal and Asherah [both Canaanite gods] and all the host of heaven” (2 Kings 23:4). From this, we learn that Canaanite gods and their worship were actually a long-standing part of Israelite religion, with women in particular weaving “coverings for Asherah” (2 Kings 23:7). Despite the denunciation of such practices in earlier texts, the exclusive worship of Yahweh appears to have been a late First Temple innovation.

Deuteronomy 6 contains the credo of Judaism—beginning “Hear (Hebrew *shema*), O Israel!” (verse 4)—which affirms that Yahweh is the one God. These verses are enshrined in the daily liturgy and, in later Jewish history, were the prayer uttered by martyrs before their deaths. The passage also prescribes the wearing by male Jews every morning of *tefillin*, the leather straps on the left arm and forehead that contain the verses. And it further commands writing the verses and placing them on the doorpost of one's house (this is the *mezuzah*, to this day found on the door of Jewish houses and, in the case of very orthodox Jews, on the doors of all rooms within the house).

The same chapter also looks back to God's promises of the land to be given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to his grace in bringing the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. It combines these promises with warnings of God's punishment if the Israelites should disobey the laws. Indeed, Deuteronomy as a whole is highly conscious of the possibility of imminent exile. If it was written sometime in the late eighth or seventh centuries B.C.E., then its authors were living under the shadow of the exile of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.E. The Judeans, who survived this trauma, were acutely aware that they, too, might lose their land. It was in this atmosphere that the idea of a covenant contingent on obedience to the law became paramount. (This was also the view of many of the classical prophets—see pp. 113ff.).

Chapter 12 furnishes one of the core laws of Deuteronomy: the centralization of the cult in “the site that the Lord your God will choose amidst all your tribes as His habitation” (verse 5). In light of Josiah's reform, this would seem to be Jerusalem. As opposed to other law codes, which assume that there were many sites where God might be worshipped, Deuteronomy restricts sacrifice to one place alone: the Temple in Jerusalem. This innovation would have created a massive crisis in the Israelite religion, for now those who lived far from Jerusalem had to find other ways to worship God besides sacrifice. It may well be that Deuteronomy's centralization of worship ironically prepared the ground for living and worshipping without a Temple, as the nation was forced to do less than fifty years later when exiled to Babylonia. Although we have no record of synagogues in Babylonia of that initial exile, it is possible that these places of worship without sacrifice had their start then.

Deuteronomy 6 refers to the laws given by God as *Torah* (literally, “instruction”). The phrase *Sefer Torah* (“Book of Instruction”) probably referred originally to the Book of Deuteronomy but eventually came to signify the first five books of the Bible.

In the rabbinic period, the word *Torah* acquired an even broader meaning to include the “oral Torah” (see pp. 209–23).

PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Massah: mah'-sah

6

[EXHORTATION TO KEEP ALL THE COMMANDMENTS]

(1) And this is the Instruction¹—the laws and the rules—that the Lord your God has commanded [me] to impart to you, to be observed in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, (2) so that you, your children, and your children's children may revere the Lord your God and follow, as long as you live, all His laws and commandments that I enjoin upon you, to the end that you may long endure. (3) Obey, O Israel, willingly and faithfully, that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly [in] a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, spoke to you.

(4) Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.² (5) You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (6) Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. (7) Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. (8) Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; (9) inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

(10) When the Lord your God brings you into the land that He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to assign to you—great and flourishing cities that you did not build, (11) houses full of all good things that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and you eat your fill, (12) take heed that you do not forget the Lord who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. (13) Revere only the Lord your God and worship Him alone, and swear only by His name. (14) Do not follow other gods, any gods of the peoples about you (15)—for the Lord your God in your midst is an impassioned God—lest the anger of the Lord your God blaze forth against you and He wipe you off the face of the earth.

(16) Do not try the Lord your God, as you did at Massah. (17) Be sure to keep the commandments, decrees, and laws that the Lord your God has enjoined upon you. (18) Do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may go well with you and that you may be able to possess the good land that the Lord your God promised on oath to your fathers, (19) and that all your enemies may be driven out before you, as the Lord has spoken.

(20) When, in time to come, your children ask you, “What mean the decrees, laws, and rules that the Lord our God has enjoined upon you?” (21) you shall say to your children, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the Lord freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand. (22) The Lord wrought before

TRANSLATED BY Harry M. Orlinsky et al.

1. Torah.

2. Literally, “the Lord is one.”

our eyes marvelous and destructive signs and portents in Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household; (23) and us He freed from there, that He might take us and give us the land that He had promised on oath to our fathers. (24) Then the Lord commanded us to observe all these laws, to revere the Lord our God, for our lasting good and for our survival, as is now the case. (25) It will be therefore to our merit before the Lord our God to observe faithfully this whole Instruction, as He has commanded us."

12:1-12

[MOSES PROCLAIMS A CODE OF SPECIAL LAWS]

(1) These are the laws and rules that you must carefully observe in the land that the Lord, God of your fathers, is giving you to possess, as long as you live on earth.

(2) You must destroy all the sites at which the nations you are to dispossess worshiped their gods, whether on lofty mountains and on hills or under any luxuriant tree. (3) Tear down their altars, smash their pillars, put their sacred posts to the fire, and cut down the images of their gods, obliterating their name from that site.

(4) Do not worship the Lord your God in like manner, (5) but look only to the site that the Lord your God will choose amidst all your tribes as His habitation, to establish His name there.¹ There you are to go, (6) and there you are to bring your burnt offerings and other sacrifices, your tithes and contributions, your votive and freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks. (7) Together with your households, you shall feast there before the Lord your God, happy in all the undertakings in which the Lord your God has blessed you.

(8) You shall not act at all as we now act here, every man as he pleases. (9) because you have not yet come to the allotted haven that the Lord your God is giving you. (10) When you cross the Jordan and settle in the land that the Lord your God is allotting to you, and He grants you safety from all your enemies around you and you live in security, (11) then you must bring everything that I command you to the site where the Lord your God will choose to establish His name: your burnt offerings and other sacrifices, your tithes and contributions, and all the choice votive offerings that you vow to the Lord. (12) And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God with your sons and daughters and with your male and female slaves, along with the Levite in your settlements, for he has no territorial allotment among you.²

* * *

1. Jerusalem?

2. The Levites were originally a territorial tribe, but they became a dispersed tribe of priests (see Deuteronomy 18:1-5) without territory. Deuteronomy makes no distinction between *kohanim*(the priests who descended from Aaron) and the Levites (the larger tribe of priests, which includes the *kohanim*). Since many Levites were dispossessed by the Deuteronomic reform, the book makes provisions for supporting them.

2 KINGS

See the headnote for Deuteronomy on pages 103-05.

PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Ahaz: <i>ah'-chaz</i> [guttural <i>ch</i> as in <i>Bach</i>]	Kidron: <i>keed'-ron</i>
Asherah: <i>ah-shay'-rah</i>	Manasseh: <i>muh-nah-sheh'</i>
Ashtoreth: <i>ash-toe'-ret</i>	Milcom: <i>mil'-comb</i>
Baal: <i>bah-al'</i>	Moab: <i>moe-ahb'</i>
Beer-sheba: <i>beh-air'-sheh'-buh</i>	Molech: <i>moe'-lech</i> [guttural <i>ch</i>]
Ben-hinnom: <i>ben-he-nome'</i>	Nathan-melech: <i>nah'-tahn-meh'-lech</i>
Bethel: <i>beth-el</i>	[guttural <i>ch</i>]
Chemosh: <i>ch eh-mohsh'</i> [guttural <i>ch</i>]	Nebat: <i>neh'-bat</i>
Geba: <i>geh-bah'</i>	Samaria: <i>sah-may'-ree-ah</i>
Hilkiah: <i>chil-kee'-yah</i> [guttural <i>ch</i>]	Sidonians: <i>si'-doh-nee-anz</i>
Josiah: <i>jo-shi'-uh</i>	Topheth: <i>toe'-fet</i>

23:1-25

[JOSIAH RESTORES TRUE WORSHIP]

(1) At the king's summons, all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem assembled before him. (2) The king went up to the House of the Lord, together with all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and prophets—all the people, young and old. And he read to them the entire text of the covenant scroll which had been found in the House of the Lord. (3) The king stood by the pillar¹ and solemnized the covenant before the Lord: that they would follow the Lord and observe His commandments, His injunctions, and His laws with all their heart and soul; that they would fulfill all the terms of this covenant as inscribed upon the scroll. And all the people entered into the covenant.²

(4) Then the king ordered the high priest Hilkiah, the priests of the second rank, and the guards of the threshold to bring out of the Temple of the Lord all the objects made for Baal and Asherah³ and all the host of heaven. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and he removed the ashes to Bethel. (5) He suppressed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to make offerings at the shrines in the towns of Judah and in the environs of Jerusalem, and those who made offerings to Baal, to the sun and moon and constellations—all the host of heaven. (6) He brought out the [image of] Asherah from the House of the Lord to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem, and burned it in the Kidron Valley; he beat it to dust and scattered its dust over the burial ground of the common

TRANSLATED BY Harry M. Orlinsky et al.

1. On a platform.

2. Deuteronomy, which is called "the text of the covenant scroll" in this passage (23:2), was seen as a new covenant to which people subscribed. But since Deuteronomy purports to be a book

written by Moses, the new covenant was made to seem like a renewal of the old covenant from the desert period.

3. A Canaanite god and goddess, respectively.

people. (7) He tore down the cubicles of the male prostitutes in the House of the Lord, at the place where the women wove coverings for Asherah.

(8) He brought all the priests from the towns of Judah [to Jerusalem] and defiled the shrines where the priests had been making offerings—from Geba to Beer-sheba. He also demolished the shrines of the gates, which were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua, the city prefect—which were on a person's left [as he entered] the city gate. (9) The priests of the shrines, however, did not ascend the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread along with their kinsmen. (10) He also defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, so that no one might consign his son or daughter to the fire of Molech.⁴ (11) He did away with the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance of the House of the Lord, near the chamber of the eunuch Nathan-melech,⁵ which was in the precincts. He burned the chariots of the sun. (12) And the king tore down the altars made by the kings of Judah on the roof by the upper chamber of Ahaz,⁶ and the altars made by Manasseh⁷ in the two courts of the House of the Lord. He removed them quickly from there and scattered their rubble in the Kidron Valley. (13) The king also defiled the shrines facing Jerusalem, to the south of the Mount of the Destroyer, which King Solomon of Israel⁸ had built for Ashtoreth,⁹ the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh,¹ the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom,² the detestable thing of the Ammonites. (14) He shattered their pillars and cut down their sacred posts and covered their sites with human bones.

(15) As for the altar in Bethel [and] the shrine made by Jeroboam³ son of Nebat who caused Israel to sin—that altar, too, and the shrine as well, he tore down.⁴ He burned down the shrine and beat it to dust, and he burned the sacred post.

(16) Josiah turned and saw the graves that were there on the hill; and he had the bones taken out of the graves and burned on the altar. Thus he defiled it, in fulfillment of the word of the Lord foretold by the man of God who foretold these happenings. (17) He asked, "What is the marker I see there?" And the men of the town replied, "That is the grave of the man of God who came from Judah and foretold these things that you have done to the altar of Bethel."⁵ (18) "Let him be," he said, "let no one disturb his bones." So they left his bones undisturbed together with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria.⁶

(19) Josiah also abolished all the cult places in the towns of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had built, vexing [the Lord]. He dealt with them

4. A Semitic deity to whom children were sacrificed by fire.

5. One of Josiah's officials who kept the horses that were used for sun worship.

6. A wicked king of Judah (reigned 732–716 B.C.E.) who introduced many pagan and idolatrous customs, including the placement in the Temple of an altar for idol worship.

7. An evil, long-reigning (688–642 B.C.E.) king of Judah who practiced idolatry and witchcraft.

8. King Solomon had married foreign wives and had imported their religions into the Israelite cult. Deuteronomy implicitly criticizes Solomon for this (see 17:17). By referring to him as "King Solomon of Israel," the text associates Solomon

with the sins of the Northern Kingdom—Israel, as distinct from Judah—that followed his reign.

9. A Semitic mother-goddess.

1. Chief god of the Moabites. Solomon built a sanctuary to Chemosh, which was used until Josiah destroyed it.

2. Chief god of the Ammonites, associated with Molech (see n. 4, above).

3. First king of Israel (reigned ca. 928–907 B.C.E.), who set up his own altars and was considered by the author as idolatrous.

4. See 1 Kings 12.

5. See 1 Kings 13:2–3.

6. See 1 Kings 13:11–32.

just as he had done to Bethel: (20) He slew on the altars all the priests of the shrines who were there, and he burned human bones on them.⁷ Then he returned to Jerusalem.

(21) The king commanded all the people, "Offer the passover sacrifice to the Lord your God as prescribed in this scroll of the covenant." (22) Now the passover sacrifice had not been offered in that manner in the days of the chieftains who ruled Israel, or during the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. (23) Only in the eighteenth year of King Josiah was such a passover sacrifice offered in that manner to the Lord in Jerusalem. (24) Josiah also did away with the necromancers and the mediums, the idols and the fetishes—all the detestable things that were to be seen in the land of Judah and Jerusalem. Thus he fulfilled the terms of the Teaching⁸ recorded in the scroll that the priest Hilkiah had found in the House of the Lord. (25) There was no king like him before who turned back to the Lord with all his heart and soul and might, in full accord with the Teaching of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.

* * *

7. According to the laws of purity, contact with corpses is forbidden; thus, anyone who might go

there would be considered defiled.

8. I.e., the five books of Moses (see 2 Kings 22).

PSALMS

The idea that *Torah* means "instruction" or "wisdom" influenced the Book of Psalms, a collection of 150 religious poems. Scholars refer to several of these poems as "Torah Psalms" since they praise God as a teacher of wisdom (Psalms 1, 19, and 139, included here, fall in this category). In Hebrew, the book as a whole is called *tehilim*, from the root meaning "praise." But many of the individual psalms are entitled *mizmor*, or "song." Seventy-three of the psalms are attributed to King David, although it is not clear whether the attribution *le-David* means "written by David" or "for David." In any case, tradition held that the whole Book of Psalms was written by David, including those chapters with other attributions. Only two psalms, 1 and 2, are anonymous and may have been added as introductions to the whole collection.

Psalms reflects a wide variety of purposes and sentiment. Some, like Psalm 1, relate to the individual, while others, like Psalm 2, are national in emphasis. Some psalms praise God, while others beg him for succor in times of affliction. Some (like Psalm 2) specifically focus on God's anointed, his earthly king, who was most likely David or one of David's royal descendants.

While the Temple still stood, it is likely that many of the psalms were recited as part of Temple liturgy, even though the priestly laws (see Leviticus, pp. 99ff.) make no mention of prayer accompanying sacrifice. It is also likely that the psalms were sung, since we have evidence of singers in the Temple. But whatever the original liturgical setting of the psalms was, for post-Temple Judaism they served as the vehicles *par excellence* for individual voluntary prayer. Jews recite psalms at the bed of an ill person and by the body of the deceased before burial. Whole communities might recite psalms at times of collective danger. Psalms were also incorporated into the daily, weekly, and holiday liturgies.

PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Sheol: *shuh-ol'*

1

["HAPPY IS THE MAN"]

- (1) Happy is the man who has not followed the counsel of the wicked,
or taken the path of sinners,
or joined the company of the insolent;
(2) rather, the teaching of the Lord is his delight,
and he studies that teaching day and night.
(3) He is like a tree planted beside streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season,
whose foliage never fades,
and whatever it produces thrives.
(4) Not so the wicked;
rather, they are like chaff that wind blows away.
(5) Therefore the wicked will not survive judgment,
nor will sinners, in the assembly of the righteous.
(6) For the Lord cherishes the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked is doomed.

2

["WHY DO NATIONS ASSEMBLE"]

- (1) Why do nations assemble,
and peoples plot vain things;
(2) kings of the earth take their stand,
and regents intrigue together
against the Lord and against His anointed?
(3) "Let us break the cords of their yoke,
shake off their ropes from us!"
(4) He who is enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord mocks at them.
(5) Then He speaks to them in anger,
terrifying them in His rage,
(6) "But I have installed My king¹
on Zion, My holy mountain!"
(7) Let me tell of the decree:
the Lord said to me,²
"You are My son,
I have fathered you this day."
(8) Ask it of Me,
and I will make the nations your domain;
your estate, the limits of the earth.
(9) You can smash them with an iron mace,^o *a spiked club*
shatter them like potter's ware."

TRANSLATED BY Moshe Greenberg et al.

1. King David (or his successors).

2. To David, presumed author of the psalm.

- (10) So now, O kings, be prudent;
accept discipline, you rulers of the earth!
(11) Serve the Lord in awe;
tremble with fright,
(12) pay homage in good faith,
lest He be angered, and your way be doomed
in the mere flash of His anger.
Happy are all who take refuge in Him.

19

["THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD"]

- (1) For the leader. A psalm of David.
(2) The heavens declare the glory of God,
the sky proclaims His handiwork.
(3) Day to day makes utterance,
night to night speaks out.
(4) There is no utterance,
there are no words,
whose sound goes unheard.
(5) Their voice carries throughout the earth,
their words to the end of the world.
He placed in them a tent for the sun,
(6) who is like a groom coming forth from the chamber,
like a hero, eager to run his course.
(7) His rising-place is at one end of heaven,
and his circuit reaches the other;
nothing escapes his heat.
(8) The teaching of the Lord is perfect,
renewing life;
the decrees of the Lord are enduring,
making the simple wise;
(9) The precepts of the Lord are just,
rejoicing the heart;
the instruction of the Lord is lucid,
making the eyes light up.
(10) The fear of the Lord is pure,
abiding forever;
the judgments of the Lord are true,
righteous altogether,
(11) more desirable than gold,
than much fine gold;
sweeter than honey,
than drippings of the comb.
(12) Your servant pays them heed;
in obeying them there is much reward.
(13) Who can be aware of errors?
Clear me of unperceived guilt,
(14) and from willful sins keep Your servant;

- let them not dominate me;
then shall I be blameless
and clear of grave offense.
- (15) May the words of my mouth
and the prayer of my heart
be acceptable to You,
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

139

["O LORD, YOU HAVE EXAMINED ME AND KNOW ME"]

- (1) For the leader. Of David. A psalm.

O Lord, You have examined me and know me.

- (2) When I sit down or stand up You know it;
You discern my thoughts from afar.
- (3) You observe my walking and reclining,
and are familiar with all my ways.
- (4) There is not a word on my tongue
but that You, O Lord, know it well.
- (5) You hedge me before and behind;
You lay Your hand upon me.
- (6) It is beyond my knowledge;
it is a mystery; I cannot fathom it.
- (7) Where can I escape from Your spirit?
Where can I flee from Your presence?
- (8) If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
if I descend to Sheol,^o You are there too.
- (9) If I take wing with the dawn
to come to rest on the western horizon,
(10) even there Your hand will be guiding me,
Your right hand will be holding me fast.
- (11) If I say, "Surely darkness will conceal me,
night will provide me with cover,"
- (12) darkness is not dark for You;
night is as light as day;
darkness and light are the same.
- (13) It was You who created my conscience;
You fashioned me in my mother's womb.
- (14) I praise You,
for I am awesomely, wondrously made;
Your work is wonderful;
I know it very well.
- (15) My frame was not concealed from You
when I was shaped in a hidden place,
knit together in the recesses of the earth.
- (16) Your eyes saw my unformed limbs;
they were all recorded in Your book;
in due time they were formed,
to the very last one of them.

place of the dead

- (17) How weighty Your thoughts seem to me, O God,
how great their number!
- (18) I count them—they exceed the grains of sand;
I end—but am still with You.
- (19) O God, if You would only slay the wicked—
you murderers, away from me!—
- (20) who invoke You for intrigue,
Your enemies who swear by You falsely.
- (21) O Lord, You know I hate those who hate You,
and loathe Your adversaries.
- (22) I feel a perfect hatred toward them;
I count them my enemies.
- (23) Examine me, O God, and know my mind;
probe me and know my thoughts.
- (24) See if I have vexatious ways,
and guide me in ways everlasting.

PROPHETS

Although prophets as diviners of the will of the gods were known in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, the institution of prophecy achieved its highest expression in biblical Israel. The Bible has several words for *prophet*, but the most important is *navi*, or "spokesman." The prophet is thus the mouthpiece of God, and Moses is the archetype of the prophet (even though, because he was "slow of speech" [4:10], the Bible says that his brother Aaron will serve as *his* "prophet" [7:1]). Prediction of the future, although it became the popular meaning of *prophecy*, was secondary to the prophet's calling until quite late. Instead, moral criticism of his own society was the hallmark of the biblical prophet. Only in this context were predictions of national catastrophe as punishments for sin part of the prophet's message.

The prophets represented here were not the only biblical prophets. Before they emerged on the scene in the eighth century B.C.E., there were others, including Samuel, who anointed both Saul and David as kings. Some prophets operated in groups; others were part of the royal courts. These latter prophets were part of the political establishment and probably did not criticize society, as did the so-called "literary" prophets—for example, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

The "literary" prophets are distinguished by both the fact that their critical message was sometimes in opposition to "official" prophets and that they (or perhaps their disciples) wrote down their prophecies in books. These prophets were often reluctant to undertake their calling: Amos, the first literary prophet, says, "I am not a prophet, and I am not a prophet's disciple" (7:14). God may touch a prophet's mouth with a burning coal in order to purify it (Isaiah 6) or require a prophet to eat a book in order to incorporate the divine message (Ezekiel 2).

At times, the prophets inveigh against the sacrificial cult as a substitute for moral behavior. But they never oppose sacrifice as such; and, indeed, some of them—Jeremiah and Ezekiel—were themselves priests. The prophets were not only social critics, but also Israelite nationalists. Isaiah, for example, was a member of the court of King Hezekiah. Amos says: "You alone have I singled out / Of all the families of the earth— / That is why I will call you to account / For all your iniquities" (3:2). Morality is the price of God's chosenness. Hosea and Ezekiel speak of the relationship of God to Israel as a marriage in which Israel has betrayed her divine "husband."

The prophets were the mouthpieces of orthodox Yahwism, the belief that there is only one God. This monotheism became the basis for a gradually growing universalism. Amos starts his book with God's prophecies against Israel's neighbors: the Aramaeans, Philistines, Edomites, Ammonites and Moabites. But rebuking the Israelites' sense that God has chosen only them, he adds, "To me, O Israelites, you are / Just like the Ethiopians. . . / True, I brought Israel up / From the land of Egypt, / But also the Philistines from Caphtor / And the Arameans from Kir" (9:7). In the last chapters of Isaiah (which scholars attribute to an author who lived in the late sixth century B.C.E., rather than to the historical Isaiah of the eighth century B.C.E.), God's dominion is over the whole world, and all other gods are mere "sticks and stone."

It was out of the creative tension between nationalism and universalism, patriotism and self-criticism that these literary prophets penned and spoke their stirring calls to moral behavior and social justice. They warned the Israelites that immorality would be punished with exile. When the Northern Kingdom of Israel was exiled by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E., the prophets turned their attention to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, prophesying that the fate visited upon their northern brethren would be theirs, too, if they failed to reform. But when that dreaded day came (see 2 Kings 25), the postexilic (from the Babylonian Exile in 586 B.C.E. to ca. 400 B.C.E.) prophets consoled the people with prophecies of return and restoration.

HOSEA

Unlike the other prophets represented here, Hosea was a native of the Northern Kingdom of Israel whose career included the last decades before that kingdom was destroyed in 722 B.C.E. (It is not clear whether Hosea witnessed the fall of the kingdom of Israel and its exile at the hands of the Assyrians.) Hosea was the first prophet to represent the relationship between Israel and God as a marriage and Israel's betrayal of God through idolatry as adultery. Indeed, perhaps more than any other prophet, his central concern is religious infidelity. Hosea acts out this infidelity by taking "a wife of whoredom" (1:2) and giving his children names (all on God's instruction) that symbolized God's rejection of his faithless people. The prophet's own life thus merges with his message.

PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Achor: <i>ah-chor'</i> [guttural <i>ch</i> as in <i>Bach</i>]	Jezreel: <i>jez-ree'-el</i>
Baalim: <i>bah-ah-leem'</i>	Lo-ammi: <i>loh-ah'-mee</i>
Hosea: <i>ho'-zay-ah</i>	Lo-ruhamah: <i>loh-roo'-chum-ah</i> [guttural <i>ch</i>]
Ishi: <i>ee'-shee</i>	

2

[THE UNFAITHFULNESS OF HOSEA'S WIFE; THE IDOLATRY OF THE NATION]

(1) The number of the people of Israel shall be like that of the sands of the sea,¹ which cannot be measured or counted; and instead of being told, "You

TRANSLATED BY Harry M. Orlinsky et al.

1. See God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 17.

are Not-My-People," they shall be called Children-of-the-Living-God.² (2) The people of Judah and the people of Israel shall assemble together and appoint one head over them; and they shall rise from the ground³—for marvelous shall be the day of Jezreel!⁴

(3) Oh, call your brothers "My People,"
And your sisters "Lovingly Accepted!"

(4) Rebuke your mother,⁵ rebuke her—
For she is not My wife
And I am not her husband—
And let her put away her harlotry from her face
And her adultery from between her breasts.

(5) Else will I strip her naked
And leave her as on the day she was born:
And I will make her like a wilderness,
Render her like desert land,
And let her die of thirst.

(6) I will also disown her children;
For they are now a harlot's brood,

(7) In that their mother has played the harlot,
She that conceived them has acted shamelessly—
Because she thought,
"I will go after my lovers,
Who supply my bread and my water,
My wool and my linen,
My oil and my drink."

(8) Assuredly,
I will hedge up her roads with thorns
And raise walls against her,
And she shall not find her paths.

(9) Pursue her lovers as she will,
She shall not overtake them;
And seek them as she may,
She shall never find them.

Then she will say,
"I will go and return
To my first husband,⁶
For then I fared better than now."

(10) And she did not consider this:
It was I who bestowed on her
The new grain and wine and oil;
I who lavished silver on her
And gold—which they used for Baal.^o

Canaanite god

(11) Assuredly,
I will take back My new grain in its time

2. Symbolic naming and renaming are characteristic of Hosea's prophecy.

3. I.e., the united nation will rise again.

4. A strategic ninth-century-B.C.E. city in the fertile northern valley. It was here that King Jehu (reigned ca. 842–814 B.C.E.) committed crimes

for which the Northern Kingdom of Israel was punished (see 1:4). Hosea promised that this curse would be turned into a blessing. *Jezreel* is also the name of Hosea's eldest son (see 1:4).

5. I.e., the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

6. I.e., the Canaanite god Baal (see 2:18).

And My new wine in its season,
And I will snatch away My wool and My linen
That serve to cover her nakedness.

(12) Now will I uncover her shame
In the very sight of her lovers,
And none shall save her from Me.

(13) And I will end all her rejoicing:
Her festivals, new moons, and sabbaths—
All her festive seasons.

(14) I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees,
Which she thinks are a fee
She received from her lovers;
I will turn them into brushwood,
And beasts of the field shall devour them.

(15) Thus will I punish her
For the days of the Baalim,⁷
On which she brought them offerings;
When, decked with earrings and jewels,
She would go after her lovers,
Forgetting Me

—declares the Lord.

(16) Assuredly,
I will speak coaxingly to her
And lead her through the wilderness
And speak to her tenderly.

(17) I will give her her vineyards from there,
And the Valley of Achor⁸ as a plowland of hope.
There she shall respond as in the days of her youth,
When she came up from the land of Egypt.

(18) And in that day

—declares the Lord—

You will call [Me] Ishi,⁹

And no more will you call Me Baali.¹

(19) For I will remove the names of the Baalim from her mouth,
And they shall nevermore be mentioned by name.

(20) In that day, I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; I will also banish
bow, sword, and war from the land. Thus I will let them lie down in safety.

(21) And I will espouse you forever:
I will espouse you with righteousness and justice,
And with goodness and mercy,

(22) And I will espouse you with faithfulness;
Then you shall be devoted to the Lord.

(23) In that day,
I will respond

—declares the Lord—

7. The plural of *Baal*.

8. A desolate region.

9. "My man," which implies greater gender equal-

ity than "my husband."

1. "My master" or "my husband." This is also the
name of a Canaanite god.

I will respond to the sky,
And it shall respond to the earth;
(24) And the earth shall respond
With new grain and wine and oil,
And they shall respond to Jezreel.²
(25) I will sow her in the land as My own;
And take Lo-ruhamah³ back in favor;
And I will say to Lo-ammi,⁴ "You are My people,"
And he⁵ will respond, "[You are] my God."

2. The fertile valley in northern Israel (literally,
"God will sow").
3. "Unconsoled" (see 1:6); Hosea's symbolical

daughter.

4. "Not my people" (see 1:9); Hosea's son.

5. I.e., the people.

AMOS

The first literary prophet, Amos was a shepherd from the Judean town of Tekoa, southeast of Jerusalem. His career lasted from 783 to 743 B.C.E. during a period of great prosperity, especially in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Unlike other prophets of his time, he was not a professional prophet but was "taken away from following the flock" (7:15). He, therefore, represents the beginning of a new movement in Israelite religion, even though one can point to precursors (for example, King Saul, who was said to have the "spirit of God" even though he was not part of a group of prophets). God sends Amos to prophesy against the wealthy citizens of the North—the "cows of Bashan" (4:1). The priest Amaziah puts him on trial for disturbing the public order and has him packed off to the backwoods of the Southern Kingdom, from which he came. In criticizing a sacrificial religion devoid of social justice, he—like many of the prophets who followed him—harks back to the desert period, when he imagined Israel did not worship God with sacrifices (the account in the Torah suggests the opposite). The Book of Amos ends with a prophecy of regeneration. Even though the destruction of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms still lay in the future, Amos's prophecies of destruction and renewal set the stage for those later prophets who lived during these catastrophes.

PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Edom: *eh'-dome*
Kiryun: *key'-own*

Sikkuth: *sih'-koht*

5:21–27

[A WARNING TO THE ISRAELITES]

* * *

(21) I loathe, I spurn your festivals,
I am not appeased by your solemn assemblies.
(22) If you offer Me burnt offerings—or your meal offerings—

TRANSLATED BY Harry M. Orlinsky et al.

I will not accept them;
 I will pay no heed
 To your gifts of fatlings.¹
 (23) Spare Me the sound of your hymns,
 And let Me not hear the music of your lutes.
 (24) But let justice well up like water,
 Righteousness like an unfailing stream.
 (25) Did you offer sacrifice and oblation to Me
 Those forty years in the wilderness,
 O House of Israel?

(26) And you shall carry off your "king"—
 Sikkuth² and Kiyun,³
 The images you have made for yourselves
 Of your astral deity—
 (27) As I drive you into exile beyond Damascus
 —Said the Lord, whose name is God of Hosts.

9:11–15

[THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL]

* * *

(11) In that day,
 I will set up again the fallen booth of David;¹
 I will mend its breaches and set up its ruins anew.
 I will build it firm as in the days of old,
 (12) So that they shall possess the rest of Edom²
 And all the nations once attached to My name
 —declares the Lord who will bring this to pass.
 (13) A time is coming
 —declares the Lord—

When the plowman shall meet the reaper,³
 And the treader of grapes
 Him who holds the [bag of] seed;
 When the mountains shall drip wine
 And all the hills shall wave [with grain].

(14) I will restore My people Israel.
 They shall rebuild ruined cities and inhabit them;
 They shall plant vineyards and drink their wine;
 They shall till gardens and eat their fruits.
 (15) And I will plant them upon their soil.
 Nevermore to be uprooted
 From the soil I have given them
 —said the Lord your God.

1. A fattened young sacrificial animal.
 2. An Akkadian name for Saturn and also a pun
 on the Hebrew *shekets* ("abomination").
 3. Another Akkadian name for Saturn.
 1. The Temple in Jerusalem.

2. One of the nations, east of the Jordan, con-
 quered by King David.
 3. I.e., the land will be so bountiful that the agri-
 cultural seasons will overlap.

ISAIAH

The first of the three major prophets (major in terms of the length of their books), Isaiah was also one of the earliest of the literary prophets. He lived in the eighth century B.C.E. and received his prophetic call around 740 B.C.E. He served as court prophet to King Hezekiah of Judah, a reforming monarch who anticipated the great reform of King Josiah. According to later Jewish tradition, Isaiah was killed by King Manasseh, who succeeded Hezekiah and was regarded as the most wicked of the Judaeans kings.

Chapter 1 is a classic prophecy of destruction followed by redemption. Isaiah prophesies at a time when the Northern Kingdom of Israel was already destroyed and only the Southern Kingdom of Judah and its capital, Jerusalem, was left standing.

Chapter 6 describes Isaiah's calling, which involves a mystical vision of God's court and the purifying of the prophet's lips with a burning coal.

Isaiah was such a towering figure in Israelite religion that a later, anonymous prophet attached his own, sixth-century-B.C.E. work to the historical Isaiah's prophecies (chapters 40–55; a Third [or Trito-] Isaiah is thought to have written chapters 56 to 66). This Second (or Deutero-) Isaiah explicitly names Cyrus the Great, who defeated the Babylonians and allowed the Judaeans to return from exile in 538 B.C.E., as the "anointed" (messiah) of God and regards the return from Babylonia in messianic terms, a process described in chapter 40.

PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Ahaz: *ah-chaz'* [guttural *ch* as in *Bach*] Jotham: *yo-tam'*
 Amoz: *ah-moz'* Sodom: *sah-dome'*
 Gomorrah: *guh-mor'-rah* Uzziah: *oo'-zee-ah*
 Hezekiah: *che-zee'-kee-ah* [guttural *ch*]

1:1–28

[ON THE WICKEDNESS AND REDEMPTION OF ISRAEL]

(1) The prophecies of Isaiah son of Amoz, who prophesied concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

(2) Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,
 For the Lord has spoken:
 "I reared children and brought them up—
 And they have rebelled against Me!
 (3) An ox knows its owner,
 An ass its master's crib:
 Israel does not know,
 My people takes no thought."

(4) Ah, sinful nation!
 People laden with iniquity!
 Brood of evildoers!
 Depraved children!

They have forsaken the Lord,
Spurned the Holy One of Israel,
Turned their backs [on Him].

(5) Why do you seek further beatings,
That you continue to offend?

Every head is ailing,
And every heart is sick.

(6) From head to foot
No spot is sound:
All bruises, and welts,
And festering sores—
Not pressed out, not bound up,
Not softened with oil.

(7) Your land is a waste,
Your cities burnt down;
Before your eyes, the yield of your soil
Is consumed by strangers—
A wasteland as overthrown by strangers!

(8) Fair Zion¹ is left
Like a booth in a vineyard,
Like a hut in a cucumber field,
Like a city beleaguered.

(9) Had not the Lord of Hosts
Left us some survivors,
We should be like Sodom,
Another Gomorrah.²

(10) Hear the word of the Lord,
You chieftains of Sodom;
Give ear to our God's instruction,
You folk of Gomorrah!

(11) "What need have I of all your sacrifices?"
Says the Lord.

"I am sated with burnt offerings of rams,
And suet of fatlings,
And blood of bulls;
And I have no delight
In lambs and he-goats.

(12) That you come to appear before Me—
Who asked that of you?

Trample My courts (13) no more;
Bringing oblations³ is futile
Incense is offensive to Me.
New moon and sabbath,
Proclaiming of solemnities,
Assemblies with iniquity,
I cannot abide.

(14) Your new moons and fixed seasons
Fill Me with loathing;
They are become a burden to Me,

1. Or "daughter of Zion," a reference to Jerusalem.

2. The cities that God totally destroys for their iniquity (see Genesis 19).

religious offerings

I cannot endure them.

(15) And when you lift up your hands,
I will turn My eyes away from you;
Though you pray at length,
I will not listen.

Your hands are stained with crime—

(16) Wash yourselves clean;
Put your evil doings
Away from My sight.

Cease to do evil;
(17) Learn to do good.
Devote yourselves to justice;
Aid the wronged.³

Uphold the rights of the orphan;
Defend the cause of the widow.

(18) "Come, let us reach an understanding,

—says the Lord.

Be your sins like crimson,
They can turn snow-white;
Be they red as dyed wool,
They can become like fleece."

(19) If, then, you agree and give heed,
You will eat the good things of the earth;

(20) But if you refuse and disobey,
You will be devoured [by] the sword.—
For it was the Lord who spoke.

(21) Alas, she has become a harlot,
The faithful city⁴
That was filled with justice,
Where righteousness dwelt—
But now murderers.

(22) Your⁵ silver has turned to dross;
Your wine is cut with water.⁵

(23) Your rulers are rogues
And cronies of thieves,
Every one avid for presents
And greedy for gifts;
They do not judge the case of the orphan,
And the widow's cause never reaches them.

Jerusalem's

(24) Assuredly, this is the declaration
Of the Sovereign, the Lord of Hosts,
The Mighty One of Israel:

"Ah, I will get satisfaction from My foes;
I will wreak vengeance on My enemies!

(25) I will turn My hand against you,
And smelt out your dross as with lye,⁶
And remove all your slag;

3. The meaning of the Hebrew is unclear.

4. Jerusalem.

5. The meaning of the Hebrew is unclear, but

this is an image of moral dilution.

6. Or, more plausibly, "in a crucible."

(26) I will restore your magistrates as of old,
And your counselors as of yore.
After that you shall be called
City of Righteousness, Faithful City."

(27) Zion shall be saved in the judgment;
Her repentant ones, in the retribution.
(28) But rebels and sinners shall all be crushed,
And those who forsake the Lord shall perish.

* * *

2:1-5

[A PROPHECY OF PEACE]

(1) The word that Isaiah son of Amoz prophesied concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

(2) In the days to come,
The Mount of the Lord's House¹
Shall stand firm above the mountains
And tower above the hills;
And all the nations
Shall gaze on it with joy.

(3) And the many peoples shall go and say:
"Come,
Let us go up to the Mount of the Lord,
To the House of the God of Jacob;
That He may instruct us in His ways,
And that we may walk in His paths."
For instruction² shall come forth from Zion,
The word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

(4) Thus He will judge among the nations
And arbitrate for the many peoples,
And they shall beat their swords into plowshares³
And their spears into pruning hooks:
Nation shall not take up
Sword against nation;
They shall never again know war.

(5) O House of Jacob!
Come, let us walk
By the light of the Lord.

* * *

6:1-8

[ISAIAH'S CALLING]

(1) In the year that King Uzziah died,¹ I beheld my Lord seated on a high and lofty throne; and the skirts of His robe filled the Temple. (2) Seraphs

1. i.e., Mount Moriah, upon which was built the Temple.
2. Literally, "Torah."

3. This refers to the metal tip of wooden plows.
1. 740 B.C.E.

stood in attendance on Him. Each of them had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his legs, and with two he would fly.

(3) And one would call to the other,
"Holy, holy, holy!
The Lord of Hosts!
His presence fills all the earth!"²

(4) The doorposts would shake at the sound of the one who called, and the House kept filling with smoke. (5) I cried,

"Woe is me; I am lost!
For I am a man of unclean lips³
And I live among a people
Of unclean lips;
Yet my own eyes have beheld
The King Lord of Hosts."

(6) Then one of the seraphs flew over to me with a live coal, which he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. (7) He touched it to my lips and declared,

"Now that this has touched your lips,
Your guilt shall depart
And your sin be purged away."

(8) Then I heard the voice of my Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me."

* * *

40:1-26

[PEACE; THE GREATNESS OF GOD]

(1) Comfort, oh comfort My people,
Says your God.

(2) Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
And declare to her
That her term of service¹ is over,
That her iniquity is expiated;
For she has received at the hand of the Lord
Double for all her sins.

(3) A voice rings out:
"Clear in the desert
A road for the Lord!
Level in the wilderness
A highway for our God!"

(4) Let every valley be raised,
Every hill and mount made low.
Let the rugged ground become level
And the ridges become a plain.

2. This passage became part of the daily prayer liturgy.

3. Impious speech.
1. The Babylonian Exile.

(5) The Presence of the Lord shall appear,
And all flesh, as one, shall behold—
For the Lord Himself has spoken.”

(6) A voice rings out: “Proclaim!”
Another asks, “What shall I proclaim?”
“All flesh is grass,

All its goodness like flowers of the field:
(7) Grass withers, flowers fade
When the breath of the Lord blows on them.
Indeed, man is but grass:

(8) Grass withers, flowers fade—
But the word of our God is always fulfilled!”

(9) Ascend a lofty mountain,
O herald of joy to Zion;
Raise your voice with power,
O herald of joy to Jerusalem—
Raise it, have no fear;
Announce to the cities of Judah:
Behold your God!

(10) Behold, the Lord God comes in might,
And His arm wins triumph for Him;
See, His reward is with Him,
His recompense before Him.

(11) Like a shepherd He pastures His flock:
He gathers the lambs in His arms
And carries them in His bosom;
Gently He drives the mother sheep.

(12) Who measured the waters with the hollow of His hand,
And gauged the skies with a span,
And meted earth’s dust with a measure,
And weighed the mountains with a scale
And the hills with a balance?

(13) Who has plumbed the mind of the Lord,
What man could tell Him His plan?

(14) Whom did He consult, and who taught Him,
Guided Him in the way of right?
Who guided Him in knowledge
And showed Him the path of wisdom?

(15) The nations are but a drop in a bucket,
Reckoned as dust on a balance;
The very coastlands He lifts like motes.

(16) Lebanon is not fuel enough,
Nor its beasts enough for sacrifice.
(17) All nations are as naught in His sight;
He accounts them as less than nothing.

(18) To whom, then, can you liken God,
What form compare to Him?

(19) The idol? A woodworker shaped it,

And a smith overlaid it with gold,
Forging links of silver.

(20) As a gift, he chooses the mulberry—
A wood that does not rot—
Then seeks a skillful woodworker
To make a firm idol,
That will not topple.

(21) Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
Have you not been told
From the very first?
Have you not discerned
How the earth was founded?

(22) It is He who is enthroned above the vault of the earth,
So that its inhabitants seem as grasshoppers;
Who spread out the skies like gauze,
Stretched them out like a tent to dwell in.

(23) He brings potentates to naught,
Makes rulers of the earth as nothing.

(24) Hardly are they planted,
Hardly are they sown,
Hardly has their stem
Taken root in earth,
When He blows upon them and they dry up,
And the storm bears them off like straw.

(25) To whom, then, can you liken Me,
To whom can I be compared?

—says the Holy One.

(26) Lift high your eyes and see:
Who created these?
He who sends out their host by count,
Who calls them each by name:
Because of His great might and vast power,
Not one fails to appear.

* * *

JEREMIAH

Born to a priestly family around 646 B.C.E., Jeremiah began to prophesy under the reign of King Josiah (ca. 626 B.C.E.). He lived through the Babylonian conquest of Judah and the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.E. Much historical material can be gleaned from his book. Jeremiah sympathized with the Deuteronomistic reform (see pp. 103–04), which occurred at the beginning of his prophetic career, and his book and Deuteronomy have phrases in common. In addition to his denunciations of social ills and political misjudgments, he reveals more about his own inner conflicts than other prophets do. His book is, therefore, an important source for a developing personal—as opposed to merely national—religion.

Jeremiah's response to the Babylonian conquest of Judah and the subsequent exile was twofold. Before the Babylonians arrived but when they were already on the horizon, he denounced those who fled to Egypt, arguing that God himself was responsible for the Babylonian incursion. After the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the priesthood and aristocracy, however, he fled to Egypt himself. But he called on those exiled to Babylonia to accept their fate and to "seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you and pray to the Lord in its behalf" (29:7).

Indeed, following Jeremiah's prescription, the exiles struck roots in Babylonia; and even when, half a century later, the Persian king Cyrus the Great allowed them to return to Judah, many chose to remain. Together with the Jews who escaped to Alexandria, the Babylonian Jews formed the first diaspora, the mode of life outside of the land of Israel that would persist until the present day. More than half a millennium after Jeremiah's prophecy, this ancient community became the site for the great academies that produced the Babylonian Talmud in about the fifth century c.e.

Chapter 1 describes Jeremiah's calling as a prophet. Unlike Amos and Isaiah, God tells him that he was already chosen in the womb and cannot avoid his vocation. Jeremiah's call also goes beyond Israel to include "nations and kingdoms" (1:10).

In chapter 31, Jeremiah prophesies a "new covenant" (31:31) that would be written on the heart in place of the covenant written on stone. This internalized religion would be much harder to disobey and would, therefore, be permanent.

1:4-10

[JEREMIAH'S CALLING]

* * *

(4) The word of the Lord came to me:

(5) Before I created you in the womb, I selected you;
Before you were born, I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet concerning the nations.

(6) I^o replied:

Ah, Lord God!
I don't know how to speak,
For I am still a boy.

Jeremiah

(7) And the Lord said to me:
Do not say, "I am still a boy,"
But go wherever I send you
And speak whatever I command you.

(8) Have no fear of them,
For I am with you to deliver you

—declares the Lord.

(9) The Lord put out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: Herewith I put My words into your mouth.

(10) See, I appoint you this day
Over nations and kingdoms:
To uproot and to pull down,
To destroy and to overthrow,
To build and to plant.

* * *

TRANSLATED BY Harry M. Orlinsky et al.

31:31-34

[A NEW COVENANT]

* * *

(31) See, a time is coming—declares the Lord—when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah. (32) It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers, when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, a covenant which they broke, though I was lord over them—declares the Lord. (33) But such is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel after these days—declares the Lord: I will put My Teaching into their inmost being and inscribe it upon their hearts. Then I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (34) No longer will they need to teach one another and say to one another, "Heed the Lord"; for all of them, from the least of them to the greatest, shall heed Me—declares the Lord.

For I will forgive their iniquities,
And remember their sins no more.

* * *

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel's prophecies span the period of the destruction of the Temple (2 Kings 25) and the Babylonian Exile. A priest like Jeremiah, Ezekiel offers a great deal of information to supplement the priestly writings in the Torah as well as messianic predictions for the architecture of a new, rebuilt Temple. His is a prophecy aimed, at least in part, at his fellow priests. Ezekiel's prophecies are characterized by a wild—some have said "psychedelic"—imagination. His visions of God's chariot (chapters 1 and 10) are the earliest source of Jewish mysticism (*ma'ase merkavah*: "deeds of the chariot"). God's instructions to the prophet require strange, symbolic behavior and sometimes involve violent imagery. But his vision of the valley of the dry bones (chapter 37) remains one of the most consoling and evocative prophecies of national rebirth ever written.

PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

Buzi: *boo'-zee*Chaldeans: *kal-dee'-anz* [short *a* in
kal, as in *all*]Chebar: *chee'-bar* [guttural *ch* as in
Bach]Jehoiachin: *ye-ho'-yuh-cheen'*[guttural *ch*]Shaddai: *shah-dahy'*

I

[THE VISION OF EZEKIEL]

(1) In the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, when I was in the community of exiles by the Chebar Canal,¹ the heavens opened and I

TRANSLATED BY Harry M. Orlinsky et al.

1. Literally, "the river Chebar," which, however, since it is in the north of present-day Iraq, would contradict Ezekiel's location in the "land of the Chaldeans" (1:3) in southern Iraq.

saw visions of God. (2) On the fifth day of the month—it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin²—(3) the word of the Lord came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi, by the Chebar Canal, in the land of the Chaldeans.³ And the hand of the Lord came upon him there.

(4) I looked, and lo, a stormy wind came sweeping out of the north—a huge cloud and flashing fire, surrounded by a radiance; and in the center of it, in the center of the fire, a gleam as of amber. (5) In the center of it were also the figures of four creatures. And this was their appearance:

They had the figures of human beings. (6) However, each had four faces, and each of them had four wings; (7) the legs of each were [fused into] a single rigid leg, and the feet of each were like a single calf's hoof; and their sparkle⁴ was like the luster of burnished bronze. (8) They had human hands below their wings. The four of them had their faces and their wings on their four sides. (9) Each one's wings touched those of the other. They did not turn when they moved; each could move in the direction of any of its faces.

(10) Each of them had a human face [at the front]; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right; each of the four had the face of an ox on the left; and each of the four had the face of an eagle [at the back]. (11) Such were their faces. As for their wings, they were separated: above, each had two touching those of the others, while the other two covered its body. (12) And each could move in the direction of any of its faces; they went wherever the spirit impelled them to go, without turning when they moved.

(13) Such then was the appearance of the creatures. With them was something that looked like burning coals of fire. This fire, suggestive of torches, kept moving about among the creatures; the fire had a radiance, and lightning issued from the fire. (14) Dashing to and fro [among] the creatures was something that looked like flares.

(15) As I gazed on the creatures, I saw one wheel on the ground next to each of the four-faced creatures. (16) As for the appearance and structure of the wheels, they gleamed like beryl.⁵ All four had the same form; the appearance and structure of each was as of two wheels cutting through each other. (17) And when they moved, each could move in the direction of any of its four quarters; they did not veer when they moved. (18) Their rims were tall and frightening, for the rims of all four were covered all over with eyes. (19) And when the creatures moved forward, the wheels moved at their sides; and when the creatures were borne above the earth, the wheels were borne too. (20) Wherever the spirit impelled them to go, they went—wherever the spirit impelled them—and the wheels were borne alongside them; for the spirit of the creatures was in the wheels. (21) When those moved, these moved; and when those stood still, these stood still; and when those were borne above the earth, the wheels were borne alongside them—for the spirit of the creatures was in the wheels.

(22) Above the heads of the creatures was a form: an expanse, with an awe-inspiring gleam as of crystal, was spread out above their heads. (23) Under the expanse, each had one pair of wings extended toward those of the others; and each had another pair covering its body. (24) When they moved, I could hear the sound of their wings like the sound of mighty waters, like the

2. King of Judah who reigned from 593 to 592 B.C.E.

3. In present-day southern Iraq.

4. Plumage.

5. A mineral that is the source for aquamarines and emeralds, among other gemstones.

sound of Shaddai,⁶ a tumult like the din of an army. When they stood still, they would let their wings droop. (25) From above the expanse over their heads came a sound. When they stood still, they would let their wings droop.

(26) Above the expanse over their heads was the semblance of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and on top, upon this semblance of a throne, there was the semblance of a human form. (27) From what appeared as his loins up, I saw a gleam as of amber—what looked like a fire encased in a frame; and from what appeared as his loins down, I saw what looked like fire. There was a radiance all about him. (28) Like the appearance of the bow⁷ which shines in the clouds on a day of rain, such was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. That was the appearance of the semblance of the Presence of the Lord. When I beheld it, I flung myself down on my face. And I heard the voice of someone speaking.

37:1-14

[EZEKIEL IN THE VALLEY OF BONES]

(1) The hand of the Lord came upon me. He took me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the valley. It was full of bones. (2) He led me all around them; there were very many of them spread over the valley, and they were very dry. (3) He said to me, "O mortal, can these bones live again?" I replied, "O Lord God, only You know." (4) And He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! (5) Thus said the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live again. (6) I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with flesh, and form skin over you. And I will put breath into you, and you shall live again. And you shall know that I am the Lord!"

(7) I prophesied as I had been commanded. And while I was prophesying, suddenly there was a sound of rattling, and the bones came together, bone to matching bone. (8) I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had grown, and skin had formed over them; but there was no breath in them. (9) Then He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, O mortal! Say to the breath: Thus said the Lord God: Come, O breath, from the four winds, and breathe into these slain, that they may live again." (10) I prophesied as He commanded me. The breath entered them, and they came to life and stood up on their feet, a vast multitude.

(11) And He said to me, "O mortal, these bones are the whole House of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, our hope is gone; we are doomed.' (12) Prophecy, therefore, and say to them: Thus said the Lord God: I am going to open your graves and lift you out of the graves, O My people, and bring you to the land of Israel. (13) You shall know, O My people, that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves and lifted you out of your graves. (14) I will put My breath into you and you shall live again, and I will set you upon your own soil. Then you shall know that I the Lord have spoken and have acted"—declares the Lord.

* * *

6. One of God's names in Genesis and Exodus.

7. I.e., rainbow.