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place of God? [20]Even though you intended to
do harm to me, God intended it for good; in
order to preserve a numerous people, as he is
doing today. [21]So have no fear; I myself will
provide for you and your little ones." In this
way he reassured them, speaking kindly to
them.

Joseph's Last Days and Death

22 So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his fa-
ther's household; and Joseph lived one hun-
dred ten years. [23]Joseph saw Ephraim's chil-
dren of the third generation; the children of
Machir son of Manasseh were also born on Jo-
seph's knees.

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

deeper agent of events. **50.19–20** Joseph's command to his brothers to not be afraid is given twice (vv. 19, 21) surrounding his explanation of God's plan. *Am I in the place of God?* echoes Jacob's angry retort to Rachel in 30.2, but now in a compassionate voice. *You intended to do harm* (lit. "evil"), *God intended it for good,* a pointed antithesis in which there is a clear sense that God's intentions shaped their intentions (cf. 20.5–6) and hence the brothers are forgiven. But the brothers' fear is not entirely unfounded, for they ought to be responsible in some fashion for their intentions. This moral problem lingers in the background of this encounter. **50.22–26** The description of Joseph's final days and death echoes the lengthier portrayal of Jacob's last days. Like his father, he lives a long and full life, on his deathbed foretells Israel's future, and is embalmed in Egypt, with an oath to be buried in the promised land. V. 22 is from the P source, and the rest is from the E source. **50.22–23** The P statement of Joseph's residence in Egypt and life span echoes the similar statement for Jacob prior to his death (47.28, P). These statements compress a considerable passage of time into a brief text. V. 23 (E) similarly describes Joseph's long and full life, but does so with the familial image of Joseph seeing his great-grandchildren by both sons. This familial image highlights the importance and blessing of offspring, ending Genesis with an image of the ancestral promise in full bloom. **50.24** Like his father, Joseph foresees the future on the eve of his death. He foretells God's plan in the exodus and the return to the promised land, but makes no mention of the enslavement in Egypt. This provides a transition to the book of Exodus, without revealing to his brothers the dangers to come. Heb 11.22 cites the episode as an example of faith. **50.25** The oath to carry Joseph's bones is fulfilled in Ex 13.19 and he is finally buried in the promised land (at Shechem) in Josh 24.32. Joseph's last request thus looks forward to the exodus and the return to Canaan. **50.26** The second mention of Joseph's life span (here from E) echoes the statement in v. 22 (P), creating an envelope structure around Joseph's death. His embalming echoes Jacob's (50.2–3), but he lacks the lengthy period of mourning, the journey, and the burial. These await the fulfillment of his prophecy of exodus and return. *Coffin* (Hebrew *'aron*), the same word used for the *ark* of the covenant (e.g., Ex 25.16), perhaps a brief allusion to another key aspect of the exodus-Sinai story. *In Egypt,* an apt hinge between the books of Genesis and Exodus.

EXODUS

Name and Content

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

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

Biblical Context

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

Although biblical tradition links the exodus with a (geographically unspecified) covenant (e.g., Deut 4.45; 6.21–25; 29.25; 1 Kings 8.9, 21; Jer 11.2–4, 6–7; 31.32; 34.13), it is the exodus itself that chiefly exercises the biblical memory. Within the Pentateuch, or Torah, the recent exodus provides a motive for worshiping the Lord (e.g., Ex 20.2; 29.46; Lev 26.13; Deut 6.12; 13.6–10; cf. Josh 24.17) and observing the law (e.g., Lev 11.45; 22.32–33; Num 15.41; Deut 5.15; 8.11–14; 29.2), especially those precepts protecting the disadvantaged (e.g., Lev 19.35; 25.38, 42, 55), because the experience of slavery is meant to instill empathy for them (e.g., Ex 23.9; Lev 19.34; Deut 10.19; 15.15; 16.12; 24.22; and see Jer 34.13–14).

Moreover, the rescue of Israel from Egypt serves as a paradigm of divine saving power, within the Torah (e.g., Lev 26.24–25; Num 23.22; 24.8; Deut 6.21–22; 20.1; 26.8) as well as among the prophets (e.g., Isa 11.16; 51.10; Jer 16.14–15; 23.7–8; 32.20–21; Am 2.10; 9.7; Mic 6.4; 7.15; cf. also Dan 9.15) and psalmists (e.g., Pss 77; 78; 81; 105; 106; 136). God is repeatedly implored to arise and save Israel from its present distress as God had in the past, in the exodus. Future redemptions of Israel may be typologically conceived as reiterations of the exodus, as the foundational narrative of the Torah is transformed from a one-time event to a recurring one (or myth; e.g., Isa 51.10–11). Nevertheless, even as the exodus may serve as myth, it does not lose its historical character. Unlike the Sinai revelation, the exodus event functions in the Bible as a point of chronological reference (e.g., Num 1.1; 9.1; Deut 9.7; Judg 19.30; 1 Sam 8.8; 2 Sam 7.6; 1 Kings 6.1; 8.16; 2 Kings 21.15; Jer 7.25).

Historical Context

THE PRESENT TEXT SEEMS TO INCORPORATE a variety of once independent sources (e.g., 4.24–26; 15.1–18; 20.2–17; chs. 21–23). The narratives of complaint during the wilderness trek (15.22–17.7) overlap with stories in Numbers; the plagues narrative (chs. 7–11) and Passover passage (ch. 12) manifest the kinds of duplication and dissonance that suggest the presence of different traditions. Details of the narrative often conflict or make little sense; for example, though the Israelites are said to live apart in Goshen (e.g., Gen 47.1–6; Ex 8.22; 9.26), they borrow valuable objects from their Egyptian neighbors (3.21–22) and the Lord must pass over Israelite homes to strike Egyptian households in the tenth plague (12.12–13). Comparison of Exodus with folklore and myth suggests the story is already the stuff of legend. Historical reconstruction is accordingly obstructed by a centuries-long process of literary formation that can hardly be retraced.

Nevertheless, the sojourn of Israelites in Egypt, plagues, and crossing the sea and wilderness are traditions on which diverse biblical sources inside and outside the Torah agree. External considerations lead many to place the historical exodus in the late thirteenth century BCE during the long reign of Rameses II, when numbers of Western Semites are known to have inhabited the Nile Delta and when conflicts with foreign labor are reported. But there is no archaeological record of the exodus in Egypt, and historical references in Exodus are slim, vague, or problematic. On the other hand, a relatively large number of Egyptian personal names are found within the tribe of Levi (e.g., Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Merari, Putiel, Phinehas, Hophni). There is therefore a basis to surmise that ancestors of some Israelites, and particularly those associated with the priestly tribe, came out of Egypt. [EDWARD L. GREENSTEIN]

1 These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each 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 people born to Jacob was seventy. Joseph was already in Egypt. [6]Then Joseph died, and all his brothers, and that whole generation. [7]But the Israelites were fruitful and prolific; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.

The Israelites Are Oppressed

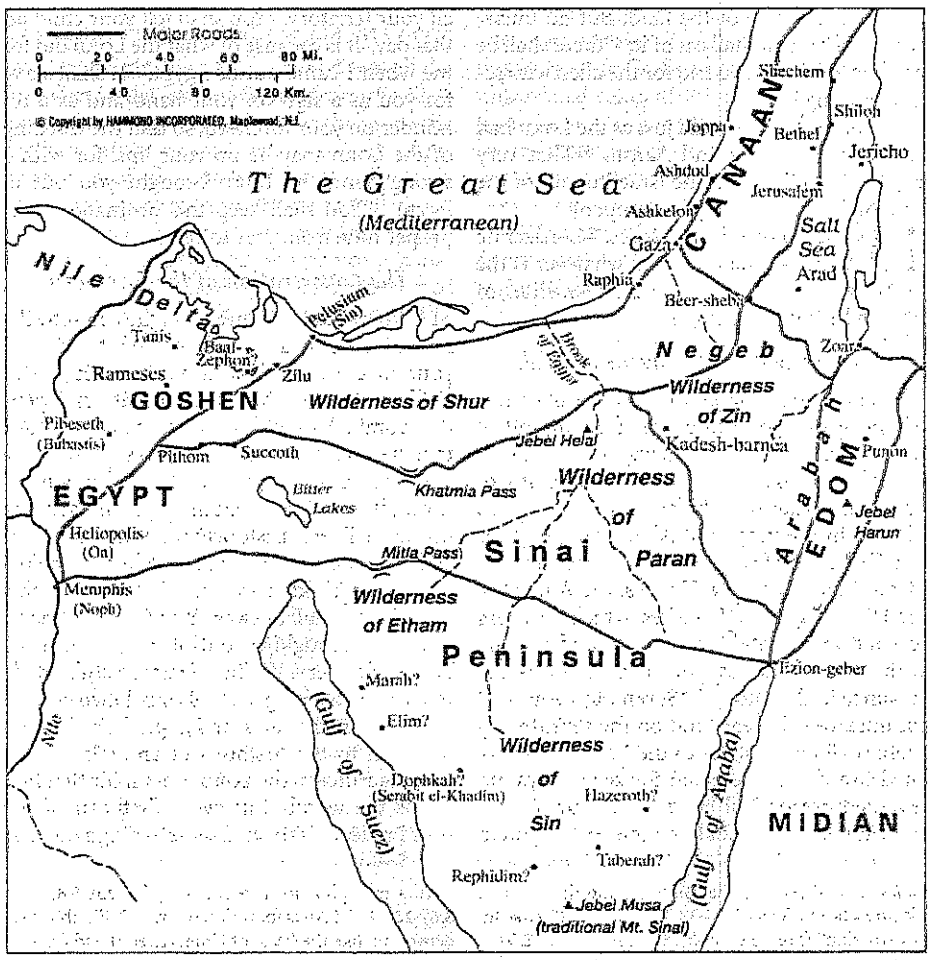
8 Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. [9]He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. [10]Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." [11]Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor. They

built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. [12]But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. [13]The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites; [14]and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

15 The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, [16]"When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live." [17]But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. [18]So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?" [19]The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the

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

1.8–22 The episode of the midwives recalls such fairy tales as "Snow White": a monarch orders a servant of the opposite sex to murder a child of the monarch's sex who is feared as a threat to the throne. **1.8** The *new king* seems to initiate a new policy toward the Asian foreigners; but *did not know* might mean "did not care about" (the same Hebrew verb is translated *took notice* in 2.25). The king remains anonymous, although many identify him with Rameses II (ca. 1290–1224 BCE) on the basis of v. 11 and the mention of "Israel" within Canaan on a monument of the succeeding pharaoh, Merneptah (ca. 1224–1204). **1.9** *The Israelite people,* in contrast to *his* (the king's) *people. Numerous . . . powerful,* in Hebrew cognate to the verbs rendered *multiplied* and *grew . . . strong* in v. 7; both terms may refer to strength in numbers (cf., e.g., Num 32.1; Deut 26.5; Joel 1.6). The assertion that Israel outnumbers Egypt is surely hyperbolic. **1.10** *Shrewdly,* lit. "wisely"—an earlier pharaoh had called Joseph incomparably "wise" (Gen 41.39); the king may resent Egypt's debt to Joseph. *Join,* the same Hebrew verb (*nosaf*) as the name Joseph (*yosef*). *Escape,* lit. "go up," more aptly referring to taking control ("rising over") rather than leaving. Letters from Egypt's agents in Canaan to pharaohs of the fourteenth century BCE at el-Amarna complain of landless "Apiru" joining forces with rebellious towns. Scholars have suggested a link between these landless folk and the "Hebrews," a term that may be related to "Apiru." **1.11** *They set.* The king's people cooperate. *Taskmasters,* lit. "officers of the corvée" (cf. 1 Kings 5.13–14). *To oppress,* used prophetically of the Egyptian bondage (Gen 15.13) and of Sarai's affliction of Hagar (Gen 16.6, 9, 11). *Pithom,* Egyptian *Per-Atum,* "House of (the sun god) Atum," and *Rameses,* "(House of) Rameses," sites in the region presumably inhabited by the Israelites in the eastern Nile Delta, the latter possibly Qantir, but also possibly a first-millennium BCE city. *Pharaoh,* Egyptian *Per-o,* "Great House," used to refer to the king of Egypt as though it were a proper name. **1.12** *They were oppressed,* lit. "they (namely, the Egyptians) oppressed him (namely, the Israelite people)," emphasizing the Egyptians' role. *The more they multiplied.* The Hebrew, *ken yirbeh,* mocks the pharaoh's words in v. 10, *pen yirbeh,* or ("lest") *they will increase. Spread,* the same Hebrew verb rendered "grew . . . rich" in Gen 30.43; Israel's proliferation in the face of Pharaoh's measures echoes Jacob's increase despite Laban's scheme. The Hebrew verb, which means lit. "to explode," sounds like a contraction of *were fruitful and prolific* (v. 7), an ironic reversal of the pharaoh's plan to contain Hebrew reproduction. *Came to dread.* Cf. Num 22.3. **1.13** More precisely "The Egyptians made the Israelites work to the point of collapse," a practice explicitly forbidden in Lev 25.43, 46; this is repeated in v. 14. **1.14** *Made . . . bitter.* See 12.8. *Mortar,* more likely "bitumen" as in another text tradition; the Hebrew words are spelled the same but vocalized differently (cf. Gen 11.3). *Field labor,* including digging irrigation canals (see Deut 11.10). **1.15** *Hebrew midwives.* Despite the Semitic names of the midwives, the Hebrew may be interpreted as "midwives of the Hebrews," i.e., Egyptian women serving the Israelites. Unlike the pharaoh, these heroic women are named. **1.16** *Birthstool,* a distinctively Egyptian device. In ancient Israel ethnicity was patrilineal, so that eliminating the males suffices to wipe out the people. **1.17** For the motif of a Gentile acknowledging Israel's God, see 18.1–12; Gen 14.18–20; Num 24.1; Josh 2.10–11; 2 Kings 5.15; Jon 1.16. The midwives precede both Israel and Egypt in recognizing Israel's national God as the true one. **1.19** *Vigorous,* lit. "lively," probably



The geographical setting of the narratives in Exodus and Numbers.

hand and as an emblem[a] on your forehead that by strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."

The Pillars of Cloud and Fire

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

a Or *as a frontlet*; meaning of Heb uncertain *b* Or *Sea of Reeds*

Crossing the Red Sea

14 Then the LORD said to Moses: 2 Tell the Israelites to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall camp opposite it, by the sea. 3 Pharaoh will say of the Israelites, "They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has closed in on them." 4 I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, so that I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD. And they did so.

5 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the minds of Pharaoh and his officials were changed toward the people, and they said, "What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?" 6 So he had his chariot made ready, and took his army with him; 7 he took six hundred picked chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. 8 The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he pursued the Israelites, who were going out boldly. 9 The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, his chariot drivers and his army; they overtook them camped by the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

10 As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the LORD. 11 They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, 'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." 13 But Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall

3.18. *Every male,* of the pure animals (see v. 13). **13.16** *Emblem,* a pendant or headband, interpreted in Judaism as phylacteries; see note on 13.9. **13.17** *Philistines,* apparently anachronistic; the Philistines would only have begun to settle the coast of Canaan at the time of the exodus; yet a Philistine presence there is taken for granted (see 15.14; cf. Gen 21.34; 26.1). *Thought,* lit. "said"; the apprehension anticipates 14.10–11. *Change their minds,* or "repent," a pun in Hebrew on *lead them.* From a historical perspective, the northern route out of Egypt was heavily fortified and therefore impassable. **13.18** *Led . . . roundabout,* lit. "had go around" (Hebrew *wayyasev*) plays on "Sea of Reeds" (*yam suf*); see note on 10.19. *Prepared for battle,* or "armed" (Judg 7.11). **13.19** See Gen 50.25. **13.20** *Succoth.* See note on 12.37, whose narrative is resumed here. *Etham.* The site is uncertain; Num 33.8 places the Etham wilderness on the far side of the water Israel will cross; see 14.2. **13.21** The Lord, depicted as a storm god (see chs. 15, 19), radiates light from within a cover of cloud (cf. Ps 18.9–13). The two pillars are one (see 14.24): by day only the cloud is visible, by night only the light; cf. 24.15–17; 40.34–38.

14.1–31 Following the pattern of contrasts developed through the plagues (see note on 8.22), Israel, whose sons had been marked for drowning by Pharaoh (1.22), is kept alive on dry land as Egypt is dealt a death blow in the water (vv. 27–30). **14.2** *Turn back.* Although the Israelites seem to have reached beyond the sea (see 13.20), they are instructed to double back in order to bait and entrap the Egyptians. *Pi-hahiroth,* possibly a temple site in the region of Succoth (13.20). *Migdol,* "Tower" in Hebrew, probably a fortification against Assyria north of the Bitter Lakes built in the seventh century BCE (cf. Jer 44.1). If *Baal-zephon* is the Zeus Casius temple that juts into Lake Sarbonis, the other sites too are located along the northern Sinai coast, and Lake Sarbonis is the *sea. Baal* is the Canaanite storm god; "Zaphon" is known as his home on the north Syrian coast, probably Mount Casius. **14.3** *Closed in on,* or "enclosed" (cf. Josh 6.1). **14.4** *Harden,* "stiffen" (see note on 4.21), a strong link with the plagues narratives. *Gain glory for myself,* lit. "prove heavy"; see v. 18; note on 4.10. *Know.* See note on 5.2; cf. also Josh 4.24. **14.5** *The people . . . fled,* as if Egypt had not pressed them to leave (12.31–33); or it has dawned on the Egyptians that the Israelites had left for more than three days (5.3). **14.6** *He had . . . made ready,* lit. "he (himself) harnessed"; see also note on 14.25. *Army,* lit. "people" (cf. Num 21.23); Pharaoh musters his "people" to head off the fleeing Hebrew *people* (v. 5). *With him,* Hebrew *immo,* a wordplay on "his people (*'ammo*)." **14.7** *Officers,* not the *officials* of v. 5 but military captains. **14.8** *Hardened.* See v. 4. *Boldly,* lit. "with hand (held) high," defiantly (Num 15.30); see Num 33.3. **14.9** In the Hebrew *all Pharaoh's horses . . . army* is placed awkwardly following *camped by the sea;* similar phrases read smoothly in v. 23. On the anachronistic use of cavalry, see note on 15.1. **14.10** *Pharaoh.* The king is in focus even though the entire army is in pursuit; cf. v. 6. *There were,* "here: . . ."; see note on 2.6. *Advancing.* In the Hebrew the verb is singular, suggesting that the Egyptian army is perceived as a single horde. *In great fear.* Cf. Moses' reply in v. 13. *Cried out to the LORD.* Cf. 2.23, where the prayer is undirected, and 5.15, where appeal is made to Pharaoh. **14.11–12** *Egypt* is used five times in two verses. **14.11** Cf. Num 11.18–20; 14.2–4. **14.12** *The very thing,* not exactly; see 5.20–21. **14.13** *Deliverance,* in Hebrew cognate to *came to their defense* in 2.17 and

never see again. 14 The LORD will fight for you,
and you have only to keep still."
15 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why do
you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go for-
ward. 16 But you lift up your staff, and stretch
out your hand over the sea and divide it, that
the Israelites may go into the sea on dry
ground. 17 Then I will harden the hearts of the
Egyptians so that they will go in after them;
and so I will gain glory for myself over Phara-
oh and all his army, his chariots, and his char-
iot drivers. 18 And the Egyptians shall know
that I am the LORD, when I have gained glory
for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his
chariot drivers."
19 The angel of God who was going before
the Israelite army moved and went behind
them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in
front of them and took its place behind them.
20 It came between the army of Egypt and the
army of Israel. And so the cloud was there
with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one
did not come near the other all night.
21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over
the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a
strong east wind all night, and turned the sea
into dry land; and the waters were divided.
22 The Israelites went into the sea on dry
ground, the waters forming a wall for them on
their right and on their left. 23 The Egyptians
pursued, and went into the sea after them, all
of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot dri-
vers. 24 At the morning watch the LORD in the
pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the
Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army
into panic. 25 He clogged[a] their chariot wheels
so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyp-
tians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for
the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

The Pursuers Drowned

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

a Sam Gk Syr: MT *removed*

saved in 14.30; it anticipates 15.2, where it is rendered *salvation*. *Never see again* echoes 10.28–29. **14.14** *Will fight* anticipates the cognate *warrior* in 15.3. God's fighting on Israel's behalf (see Deut 1.30; 3.22; 20.4) is developed in Joshua (10.14, 42; 23.3, 10). **14.15** It is presupposed that, beside responding to the people's complaint (vv. 13–14), Moses appealed to the Lord, as in 5.22–23. **14.16** *Staff* (see note on 7.8–13) and *stretch out your hand* (see note on 7.5) recall the plagues (e.g., 10.12–13). *Divide.* Splitting the sea evokes an Israelite creation myth in which the Lord cuts through the primeval sea monster (Isa 51.9; Job 26.13); Isa 51.10 in fact compares the exodus to creation. The nature myth in which the Lord cleaves the hostile sea monster, a tale shared with other Near Eastern cultures, is here transformed into a historical drama in which the Lord divides an inanimate sea and slays his enemies in it. *Dry ground,* an allusion to a version of the creation myth in which the Lord dries up the primeval sea (Ps 74.13–15; Isa 50.2; 51.10; Nah 1.4). **14.17** *Gain glory.* See note on 14.4. **14.19** *Angel,* a divine manifestation in the cloud and fire; *the LORD* in v. 24; see note on 3.4. *Army,* lit. "camp" here and in vv. 20, 24. **14.20** *It . . . it,* apparently the angel. The divine presence, glowing within the cloud, blocks the oncoming Egyptians; see note on 13.21; cf. Josh 24.7. *One . . . the other,* the Israelite and Egyptian camps. **14.21** See note on 14.16. *Strong* anticipates *my strength* in 15.2. *East wind.* See 10.13. *Dry land,* different from the Hebrew term rendered *dry ground* in vv. 16, 22; used in Gen 7.22; Josh 3.17; 4.18. **14.23** The Hebrew defers *into the sea* to the verse's end. **14.24** *The LORD.* See note on 14.19. *Looked down.* The Lord's radiant face, no longer veiled by cloud, "panics" the Egyptians, who recognize him (v. 25). Mesopotamian kings boasted that the mere sight of their divine aura would terrify the enemy. **14.25** *Clogged,* lit. "removed" or "turned aside." Greek and other manuscript traditions read lit. "he bound," thus having the Lord mirror Pharaoh, who "binds" or "harnesses," preparing his chariot in v. 6 (see note on 14.6). *Difficulty,* lit. "heaviness"; in vv. 4, 17 the Lord says he will "prove heavy" for Pharaoh's army (see note on 14.4). *Fighting.* See note on 14.14. **14.27** *Normal depth,* lit. "full strength." *Egyptians.* This word, lit. "Egypt," which occurs twice mid-verse, is enclosed by *sea,* twice before and once after, as the Egyptians are enveloped by the water. **14.28** *Not one . . . remained,* an echo of the plagues (see note on 10.19). **14.29** *Walked.* The Hebrew syntax may be better understood as "had walked"; see v. 22, whose echo here frames the episode of drowning; the frame highlights Israel's salvation. **14.30** *Saved.* See note on 14.13. *From the Egyptians,* lit. "from Egypt's hand," contrasting with the Lord's marvelous "hand," rendered *work* in v.

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

The Song of Moses

15 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this
song to the LORD:
"I will sing to the LORD, for he has
triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the
sea.
2 The LORD is my strength and my might,[a]
and he has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will exalt him.
3 The LORD is a warrior;
the LORD is his name.
4 "Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast
into the sea;
his picked officers were sunk in the
Red Sea.
5 The floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a
stone.
6 Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in
power—
your right hand, O LORD, shattered the
enemy.
7 In the greatness of your majesty you
overthrew your adversaries;
you sent out your fury; it consumed
them like stubble.
8 At the blast of your nostrils the waters
piled up,
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the
sea.
9 The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will
overtake,
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall
have its fill of them.
I will draw my sword, my hand shall
destroy them.'
10 You blew with your wind, the sea covered
them;
they sank like lead in the mighty
waters.
11 "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in splendor, doing wonders?
12 You stretched out your right hand,
the earth swallowed them.

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

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

15.1–19 The song of Moses proper, vv. 1b–18, written in "high," archaic Hebrew verse, extensively using parallelism, expresses Israel's trust (14.31; cf. Ps 106.12). Although the song refers to the events related in ch. 14, it does not narrate them in sequence and the descriptions do not entirely match. **15.1** *Moses.* See note on 15.21. *Israelites.* Since the song is formulated in the first-person singular, perhaps Moses sings a line and the Israelites respond antiphonally. *I will sing,* or "let me sing." The Hebrew rendered *triumphed gloriously* is used elsewhere of the sea's excrescence (e.g., Ps 89.9) and of human arrogance (e.g., Isa 2.12); the basic sense is "to be high," a polar contrast to the Egyptians (see vv. 5, 10). *Horse.* Egyptian reliefs and paintings of the late second millennium BCE show horses pulling chariots but not being ridden. Biblical texts of the eighth century BCE (e.g., Isa 31.1) know of Egyptians traveling on horseback. *Rider,* lit. "its rider." *Thrown,* ironically homonymous with "high" in "high hand" (see note on 14.8). **15.2** *The LORD,* the short name "Yah," placed at the end of the clause in Hebrew, meaning that the Israelites declare that "Yah"—and no other—is their God; see v. 11. *Salvation.* See note on 14.13. *Praise,* lit. "enshrine." *My father's God.* Cf. 3.15–16. *Exalt,* cognate to "high" in (see note on) 14.8. **15.3** *Warrior,* lit. "man of war," typical of a storm god (see notes on 9.23; 13.21); cf. Ps 24.8. *Name.* See 3.13–15; 6.3. **15.4** The language recalls 14.7. *Red Sea.* See note on 10.19. **15.5** This verse chronologically follows vv. 8–10. *Floods,* plural of "the deep" (Gen 1.2). **15.7** *Majesty,* in Hebrew cognate to *triumphed* (v. 1). The first clause of this verse forms the third line of the distinctively Canaanite "staircase" parallelism begun in v. 6; other "staircases" are vv. 11, 16b–17a. Staircases have a retarding, focusing effect. **15.8** The mobile is turned stationary. *Nostrils.* Cf. Ps 18.8; cf. also Ex 14.21; Deut 11.4. *Floods* denotes "flow," a different Hebrew term from that translated *floods* in v. 5. In Hebrew this clause alliterates. *Heap,* used nearly always of water; cf. *wall* in 14.22. 29. *Deeps,* rendered *floods* in v. 5. *The sea,* or "Sea," a name of the Canaanite sea god; see note on 14.16. **15.9** The first five Hebrew words (through *spoil*) alliterate. *Destroy,* lit. "dispossess," an intention at cross-purposes with the Lord's (see v. 17). **15.10** *Blew,* a rare verb in Hebrew. *Sank,* a different Hebrew verb from that translated *sunk* in v. 4, echoing *depths* in v. 5. *Lead.* Cf. *stone* in v. 5. *Mighty,* in Hebrew cognate to *glorious* in v. 6. **15.11** The second praise in direct address, also a "staircase" parallelism (see note on 15.7). *Gods.* See note on 12.12; cf. 2 Sam 7.22–23; Ps 86.8–10. *Majestic,* rendered *glorious* in v. 6; a repeti-

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

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

The Song of Miriam

20 Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. 21 And Miriam sang to them:

"Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed
gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the
sea."

Bitter Water Made Sweet

22 Then Moses ordered Israel to set out from the Red Sea,[a] and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. 23 When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter. That is why it was called Marah.[b] 24 And the people com-

a Or *Sea of Reeds* *b* That is *Bitterness*

tion enhancing coherence. *In holiness,* or "among the holy ones" (so too in Ps 68.17 and perhaps 16.24). **15.12** *Stretched.* See note on 14.16. *Right hand.* See v. 6. *Earth,* probably connoting the netherworld (e.g., Eccl 3.21; Isa 14.12), whose *swallow* (Num 16.32) is figurative of burial; cf. Isa 5.14 and the voracious appetite of the Canaanite death god Mot (Hab 2.5). **15.13** The song turns to the Lord's guidance of Israel to its land, using pastoral language: *led, abode* (lit. "pasture") as in Ps 23.2–3. *Steadfast love,* used of covenantal as well as personal devotion. *Redeemed.* See note on 6.6. *Strength* recalls v. 2, lending coherence. *Abode,* in Hebrew cognate to *exalt* (v. 2), the land of Israel (see v. 17). **15.14–16** Anachronistic anticipation of the reaction in the east to the news of Egypt's destruction; cf. 18.1; Josh 2.9–11; but see note on 15.15. **15.14** *Philistia.* See note on 13.17. **15.15** The widespread dread suggested here (cf. Josh 9.9–10) is contradicted by the succeeding narrative; neither the Edomites (Num 20.14–21), the southern Canaanites (Num 21.1), nor the Amorites (Num 21.21–23) are intimidated by Israel; Moab conspires with Midian to defeat Israel by magic (Num 22.2–7). The terminology *chiefs,* lit. "bulls," and *leaders,* lit. "rams," reflects ancient Canaanite usage. **15.16** Ps 105.38 attributes the same *dread* to the post-plague Egyptians. *As a stone.* The simile's repetition (see v. 5) links the second part of the song with the first. The Israelites *passed by* the peoples situated en route to Canaan (cf. Deut 29.16). *Acquired.* "Created" is more in keeping with archaic usage (e.g., Gen 14.19, 22; Deut 32.6; Pss 74.2; 78.54; 139.13; Prov 8.22). **15.17** *Mountain of . . . possession,* an archaic expression referring either anachronistically to Mount Zion or to hilly Canaan (e.g., Deut 3.25). *Abode,* not the same Hebrew word as that rendered *abode* in v. 13 but cognate to *established* here. *Sanctuary,* the Jerusalem temple or a holy abode in general (cf. Ps 78.54). When Israel takes possession, the land becomes Israel's holy (designated) place (Ps 114.2). **15.18** Proclaiming the deity king is customary in Near Eastern creation myths; cf., e.g., Deut 33.5; Ps 29.10. **15.19** This verse recapitulates and resumes the narrative in 14.27–29.

15.20 *Prophet,* Miriam, so called only here; cf. Num 12.1–9; see Mic 6.4. *Miriam.* See note on 2.4. *Aaron's sister.* See note on 6.23; she conspires with Aaron in Num 12. *Tambourine.* Archaeological finds depict a hand drum without jingles. *Dancing,* a form of (not only female) religious praise; e.g., 32.19; Judg 21.21; 2 Sam 6.5; Pss 149.3; 150.4. **15.21** The victory song typically belongs to women (see Judg 11.34; 1 Sam 18.6–7); Miriam and her cohort may in an earlier tradition have initiated the song; note the exhortation *sing* in contrast to "let me sing" in v. 1; but in the present context the women answer the men. **15.22–27** In parallel episodes in Numbers, Israel is punished for its complaints. **15.22** *Shur,* the site of an oasis (see Gen 16.7), located between the Negeb and Egypt (Gen 20.1). **15.23** *Marah,* often identified with Hawwarah, the site of a bitter spring down the eastern coast of the Gulf of Suez. Alternatively, a site along the heavily saline Bitter Lakes. **15.24** *Complained,* the key verb in virtually all the complaint episodes. **15.25** *Showed,* un-

plained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" 25 He cried out to the LORD; and the LORD showed him a piece of wood;[a] he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

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

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

Bread from Heaven

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

4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not. 5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather on other days." 6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt; 7 and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your complaining against the LORD. For what are we, that you complain against us?" 8 And Moses said, "When the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening and your fill of bread in the morning, because the LORD has heard the complaining that you utter against him—what are we? Your complaining is not against us but against the LORD."

9 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the Israelites, 'Draw near to the LORD, for he has heard your complaining.' " 10 And as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the Israelites, they looked toward the wilderness, and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. 11 The LORD spoke to Moses and said, 12 "I have heard the complaining of the Israelites; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.' "

a Or *a tree* *b* Heb *he*

usual usage of "to instruct" ("teach" in Deut 33.10); punning on the soundalike "Marah" and on *statute . . . ordinance,* synonyms of the Hebrew cognate *torah,* "instruction." The reference of *statute . . . ordinance* is unclear; see 16.4. *He put them.* The Hebrew has the ambiguous "he put him to the test"; Israel may be testing God's reliability too (cf. 17.2). **15.26** *Diseases,* not necessarily the plagues; Egypt is also otherwise portrayed as a diseased land (e.g., Deut 7.15). *Heals,* used of purifying water in a similar miracle tale ("made . . . wholesome" in 2 Kings 2.21–22), making the analogy plain: I can cure you as I cured the water—if you obey me. **15.27** *Elim,* often identified with Wadi Gharandel, south of Hawwarah (see note on 15.23). The round numbers set a legendary tone.

16.1–36 In the parallel episode in Num 11, God produces the quails only after the manna fails to suffice. **16.1** *The whole . . . came,* lit. "They set out from Elim, and the whole congregation came," an irregular variant on the typical travel formula (see Num 33). *Sin,* of uncertain identification, similar to *Sinai. Second month.* They have traveled exactly one month (see 12.6, 17–18), and this is the seventh stop (see 12.37; 13.20; 14.9; 15.22, 23, 27) and the third complaint (see 14.11; 15.24). *Departed,* the theme word "exodus" (see note on 3.10). **16.2** *Aaron.* In 15.24 the people *complained* against Moses alone. *In the wilderness,* superfluous information, suggesting perhaps that the wilderness is a factor (see v. 3). **16.3** Cf. 14.11; Num 20.3–5. **16.4** *Rain.* Cf. the hail the Lord "rained down" on Egypt (rendered *cause . . . to fall* in 9.18). *Test.* Cf. 15.25–26; Deut 8.16. *Instruction,* Hebrew *torah;* see note on 15.25. **16.5** *Prepare,* in the sense of "set aside" (e.g., 23.20; Josh 4.3) or "measure" ("calculate" in Deut 19.3) as in v. 18. *Twice as much,* so that one portion can be saved for the sabbath, on which gathering is forbidden (Num 15.32–36); see vv. 22–30. **16.6–7** There is no mention of quail, as in v. 13. *Know.* See note on 5.2; cf. v. 12. *Glory,* the divine aura (e.g., v. 10; 24.16; 33.18–23; 40.34–35; see notes on 13.21; 14.24), lit. "heaviness" (see note on 4.10). *We,* an unusual Hebrew form, repeated in v. 8. **16.8** *Meat,* quail (v. 13). *Bread,* manna (vv. 13–15). **16.9** *To the LORD,* lit. "before the LORD," perhaps an anachronistic reference to the tabernacle; cf. vv. 33–34. **16.10** Cf. Num 16.42. **16.12** *Twilight* evokes Passover (12.6). *Know.* See v. 6; note on 5.2.

not caught, the owner of the house shall be
brought before God,[a] to determine whether or
not the owner had laid hands on the neigh-
bor's goods.

9 In any case of disputed ownership involv-
ing ox, donkey, sheep, clothing, or any other
loss, of which one party says, "This is mine,"
the case of both parties shall come before
God;[a] the one whom God condemns[b] shall
pay double to the other.

10 When someone delivers to another a
donkey, ox, sheep, or any other animal for
safekeeping, and it dies or is injured or is car-
ried off, without anyone seeing it, 11 an oath
before the LORD shall decide between the two
of them that the one has not laid hands on the
property of the other; the owner shall accept
the oath, and no restitution shall be made.
12 But if it was stolen, restitution shall be made
to its owner. 13 If it was mangled by beasts, let
it be brought as evidence; restitution shall not
be made for the mangled remains.

14 When someone borrows an animal from
another and it is injured or dies, the owner not
being present, full restitution shall be made.
15 If the owner was present, there shall be no
restitution; if it was hired, only the hiring fee is
due.

Social and Religious Laws

16 When a man seduces a virgin who is not
engaged to be married, and lies with her, he
shall give the bride-price for her and make her
his wife. 17 But if her father refuses to give her
to him, he shall pay an amount equal to the
bride-price for virgins.

18 You shall not permit a female sorcerer to
live.

19 Whoever lies with an animal shall be put
to death.

20 Whoever sacrifices to any god, other
than the LORD alone, shall be devoted to de-
struction.

21 You shall not wrong or oppress a resi-
dent alien, for you were aliens in the land of
Egypt. 22 You shall not abuse any widow or or-
phan. 23 If you do abuse them, when they cry
out to me, I will surely heed their cry; 24 my
wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the
sword, and your wives shall become widows
and your children orphans.

25 If you lend money to my people, to the
poor among you, you shall not deal with them
as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from

a Or *before the judges* b Or *the judges condemn*

sils." *Double,* as in v. 4. **22.8** *Be brought,* rather "approach." *God,* an oracle (see note on 21.6). *To determine,* not in the Hebrew; rather, the householder swears (the words rendered *whether or not* are an oath formula) "he did not lay a hand . . ." *Goods,* meaning *property* as in v. 11, not *goods* as in v. 7. **22.9** *God.* See note on 22.8; cf. 1 Kings 8.31–32. *Condemns,* or "declares to be in the wrong" (as in Deut 25.1). *Double,* as in v. 4. The Code of Hammurabi condemns the culprit to death. **22.10** *Carried off.* Cf. Job 1.14–17. **22.11** *Before the LORD,* or "(taking) the LORD's (name)" (see note on 21.6); cf. 1 Kings 2.43. *That,* the oath formula (see note on 22.8), taken by the safekeeper. *No restitution shall be made,* "(one) does not pay" restitution plus fine (see v. 9). **22.12** *Restitution shall be made,* because the safekeeper's negligence, spelled out in Hammurabi's laws, is assumed. **22.13** *Evidence.* Cf. 1 Sam 17.34–35; Am 3.12. *Restitution . . . remains.* In Gen 31.39 Jacob goes beyond the law. **22.14** *An animal,* not in the Hebrew; any borrowed property may be meant. *Injured,* "broken," referring to an animal or object. **22.15** *If the owner was present.* The owner could have prevented a mishap as well as the borrower. *It,* the object or animal. *The hiring fee is due* because the renter paid for a sound implement or animal. **22.16** *A virgin,* a young woman. *Is not,* more precisely "has never been." *Bride-price.* Cf. Gen 24.12; 1 Sam 18.25. Deut 22.29 specifies 50 shekels. Cf. Deut 22.23–27 (rape). **22.17** *If her father refuses.* Deut 22.29 excludes the circumstance so that the girl's marriage is guaranteed. *For virgins.* Cf. the legal principle implied in (see note on) 22.5. **22.18–22** These laws are formulated apodictically (*you shall/shall not*) like the Ten Commandments. **22.18** *Female sorcerer,* from the Hebrew for "to cast a spell," singled out perhaps for her popularity (cf. 1 Sam 28; Ezek 13.17–23); for the popularity of sorcery generally, see, e.g., 2 Kings 23.24; Isa 3.2–3. The Torah abominates any form of divine manipulation other than a direct approach to the Lord; cf. Lev 19.26, 31; 20.6, 27; Deut 18.9–14. **22.19** Cf. Lev 18.23; 20.15–16; Deut 27.21. **22.20** *Devoted* to destruction, placed under ban; see Deut 13.12–17; cf. Lev 27.28–29; Josh 6.21; 7; Judg 21.5–11; 1 Sam 15.1–9. **22.21** *Oppress.* See 3.9; cf. 23.9. *Aliens.* See Introduction. **22.22** *Abuse.* See 1.11–12. *Orphan.* Protecting the "fatherless," along with the indigent *widow,* is an express duty of ancient Near Eastern monarchs as well as the Lord (e.g., Deut 10.18; Ps 68.5); cf., e.g., Deut 24.17; Isa 1.17; Jer 7.6; 22.3; Zech 7.10. **22.23** *Cry.* See 3.7. **22.24** *Sword,* in war (cf. Isa 9.11–17). *Wives.* Men are addressed (see note on 19.15). The grim poetic justice underscores the idea that Israel was liberated for the purpose of establishing a just society. **22.25** *People,* Israel. Cf. Lev 25.36–37; Deut 23.19–20; Ps 15.5; Prov 28.8; Ezek 18.8, 13, 17. **22.26–27** Cf. Deut 24.6, 10–13; Ezek 18.12, 16; 33.15. **22.26** *Cloak.* Cf. Am 2.8. An Israelite letter from the

them. 26 If you take your neighbor's cloak in
pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes
down; 27 for it may be your neighbor's only
clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that
person sleep? And if your neighbor cries out
to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate.

28 You shall not revile God, or curse a
leader of your people.

29 You shall not delay to make offerings
from the fullness of your harvest and from the
outflow of your presses.[a]

The firstborn of your sons you shall give to
me. 30 You shall do the same with your oxen
and with your sheep: seven days it shall re-
main with its mother; on the eighth day you
shall give it to me.

31 You shall be people consecrated to me;
therefore you shall not eat any meat that is
mangled by beasts in the field; you shall throw
it to the dogs.

Justice for All

23 You shall not spread a false report. You
shall not join hands with the wicked to
act as a malicious witness. 2 You shall not fol-
low a majority in wrongdoing; when you bear
witness in a lawsuit, you shall not side with the
majority so as to pervert justice; 3 nor shall you
be partial to the poor in a lawsuit.

4 When you come upon your enemy's ox or
donkey going astray, you shall bring it back.

5 When you see the donkey of one who
hates you lying under its burden, and you
would hold back from setting it free, you must
help to set it free.[a]

6 You shall not pervert the justice due to
your poor in their lawsuits. 7 Keep far from a
false charge, and do not kill the innocent and
those in the right, for I will not acquit the
guilty. 8 You shall take no bribe, for a bribe
blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of
those who are in the right.

9 You shall not oppress a resident alien; you
know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens
in the land of Egypt.

Sabbatical Year and Sabbath

10 For six years you shall sow your land and
gather in its yield; 11 but the seventh year you
shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of
your people may eat; and what they leave the
wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with
your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.

12 Six days you shall do your work, but on
the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox
and your donkey may have relief, and your
homeborn slave and the resident alien may be
refreshed. 13 Be attentive to all that I have said
to you. Do not invoke the names of other
gods; do not let them be heard on your lips.

The Annual Festivals

14 Three times in the year you shall hold a fes-
tival for me. 15 You shall observe the festival of

a Meaning of Heb uncertain

seventh century BCE complains that a laborer's garment was seized for unsatisfactory work. **22.27** *For . . . cover,* lit. "for it is his only covering, it is his cloak for his skin." Cf. Job 22.6; 24.7. *Compassionate* anticipates 34.6 (rendered *gracious* there). **22.28** *Revile,* rather "curse," as in Lev 24.11–16, 23; cf. 1 Kings 21.13; Job 2.9–10; Isa 8.21. *Leader.* See note on 16.22; cf. 2 Sam 16.5–13. Quoted in Acts 23.5. **22.29** *Offerings,* added in translation, inferred from such passages as Num 18.11–12, 26–30; Deut 26.1–15; the juxtaposition with the firstborn law suggests first fruits (23.19) are meant, but tithes (Num 18.21–32; Deut 14.22–29) too may be intended. *Firstborn.* See note on 13.1–2. **22.30** *On the eighth day,* following a seven-day period for overcoming the ritual pollution that accompanies birth (Lev 12.2–3); see Lev 22.27; cf. Ex 29.35–37. **22.31** *Consecrated,* or "who are holy," as in Lev 19.2, a similar context. *Mangled.* See note on 21.28.

23.1–3 Laws addressed to potential witnesses. **23.1** *False.* Cf. (and see note on) 20.16; Lev 19.16; Deut 5.20. *Malicious.* See Pss 27.12; 35.11. The penalty would seem to be as in Deut 19.18–19 (and in the Code of Hammurabi). **23.3** *Partial.* See Deut 16.19. *To the poor,* in light of Lev 19.15; Deut 1.17; and esp. v. 6 below; "(even) to the poor," for whom sympathy is natural (for the style see v. 4). **23.4** *Your enemy's,* "(even) your enemy's" (see note on 23.3), anyone's; cf. Deut 22.1–3. On overcoming hatred, cf. Lev 19.17–18. **23.5** *One who hates,* a poetic synonym of *enemy* (e.g., Ps 21.8). *Setting it free,* or "unloading it"; cf. Deut 22.4, where loading or "lifting up," a more demanding activity, is called for. **23.6–9** These verses resume vv. 1–3 and address judges. **23.6** See note on 23.3; cf. Ps 82.3–4; Isa 10.2; Jer 5.28; Am 2.6–7; 5.12. **23.7** *False charge.* Cf. v. 1. *Kill,* by erroneous condemnation; cf. Ps 94.6–7. *Acquit,* "declare in the right" (as in Deut 25.1); cf. Ex 34.7. **23.8** See Deut 1.17; 16.19; 27.25; cf. Ps 26.9–10; Prov 17.23; Isa 1.23; 5.23; Ezek 22.12; Mic 3.11. **23.9** See 22.21; Introduction. **23.10–11** Cf. the cultic emphasis of Lev 25.1–7, 20–22 and the socioeconomic emphasis of Deut 15. **23.12** *Refreshed,* like the Lord after creation (31.17). See note on 20.8–11; cf. the motive in 23.11; Deut 5.14–15. **23.13** *Invoke* may be taken to elaborate 20.3; cf. Josh 23.7; Hos 2.17; Zech 13.2. The repetitive, impressionistic style called "parallelism" brings the section to closure. **23.14–17** On the

unleavened bread; as I commanded you, you
shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at
the appointed time in the month of Abib, for
in it you came out of Egypt.
No one shall appear before me empty-
handed.
16 You shall observe the festival of harvest,
of the first fruits of your labor, of what you
sow in the field. You shall observe the festival
of ingathering at the end of the year, when you
gather in from the field the fruit of your labor.
17 Three times in the year all your males shall
appear before the Lord God.
18 You shall not offer the blood of my sacri-
fice with anything leavened, or let the fat of my
festival remain until the morning.
19 The choicest of the first fruits of your
ground you shall bring into the house of the
Lord your God.
You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

The Conquest of Canaan Promised

20 I am going to send an angel in front of you,
to guard you on the way and to bring you to
the place that I have prepared. 21 Be attentive
to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel
against him; for he will not pardon your trans-
gression; for my name is in him.
22 But if you listen attentively to his voice
and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to
your enemies and a foe to your foes.
23 When my angel goes in front of you, and
brings you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the
Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the
Jebusites, and I blot them out, 24 you shall not
bow down to their gods, or worship them, or
follow their practices, but you shall utterly de-
molish them and break their pillars in pieces.
25 You shall worship the Lord your God, and I[a]
will bless your bread and your water; and I will
take sickness away from among you. 26 No one
shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will
fulfill the number of your days. 27 I will send
my terror in front of you, and will throw into
confusion all the people against whom you
shall come, and I will make all your enemies

a Gk Vg: Heb *he*

calendar; see note on 12.2. **23.14** *Hold a festival.* See note on 5.1. **23.15** *Commanded.* See 12.14–20; 13.3–10. The Passover offering, a home ritual (see 12.1–11), is not mentioned here (see note on 12.1–28). *Abib.* See note on 12.2. *Appear before me,* lit. "see my face," an idiom meaning "to worship," devolving from the practice of seeing a god's image in a shrine (e.g., Ps 42.2; Isa 1.12). *Empty-handed.* See note on 3.21. **23.16** *Festival of harvest,* the Festival of Weeks (34.22; Num 28.26; Deut 16.10; cf. Lev 23.15), so named for its timing seven weeks after Passover (Lev 23.15; Deut 16.9). *First fruits.* The first produce of each crop, like human and animal firstborn (see note on 13.1–2), is rendered to God; cf. v. 19. Deut 26.1–11 does not connect first fruits with a particular festival. The crop is elsewhere described as *wheat* (34.22), "new grain" (Lev 23.16; Num 28.26), and "standing grain" (Deut 16.9). *Festival of ingathering,* the Festival of Booths (Lev 23.34; Deut 16.13). The Priestly traditions reflected in Lev 23.34; Num 29.12 date it to the fifteenth day of the seventh month. *Fruit of your labor.* See Deut 16.13. **23.17** *Males.* See note on 10.11. *Appear before,* "see the face of" (see note on 23.15). *Lord,* rendered *master* in 21.4–6, implying the Israelites are the Lord's servants (Lev 25.55). *God,* the name Yahweh, elsewhere rendered Lord. **23.18** *Leavened,* in light of 34.25; Deut 16.3–4, an addendum to v. 15. *Fat,* the hard, inedible coating of the entrails, burned into smoke (e.g., 29.12; Lev 3.5) and savored by God, signifying acceptance (e.g., Gen 8.21; Lev 26.31). *Until the morning.* See note on 12.10. **23.19** *Choicest,* rendered *best* in 34.26; an addendum to v. 16. The amount depends on individual ability (Deut 16.17). *House,* a temple such as that at Shiloh (Judg 18.31; 1 Sam 1.17) or Jerusalem (1 Kings 8.10). *You shall not . . . milk.* Mixing death with a life fluid is ritually polluting (cf. loss of blood or semen from a reproductive organ, Lev 12; 15). The context here and in 34.26 is opaque, but in Deut 14.21 the law occurs among eating regulations.

23.20–33 Biblical law is presented through the analogy of ancient Near Eastern treaty conditions that an overlord (the Lord) imposes on a vassal (Israel). Such treaties conclude with curses to befall the vassal should it disobey. Blessings and curses conclude legislation in Lev 26; Deut 28. Here they are intermixed with commands because the legislation does not end but resumes with cultic law. The passage is elaborated in Deut 7.12–26. **23.20** *Angel.* Cf. 14.19; see Josh 5.13–15; Judg 2.1–5. **23.21** *Name,* a concretization of the deity; e.g., Deut 12.5, 11; Pss 20.1; 54.1. **23.22** *Foe,* Hebrew *tsar,* perhaps a play on "Egypt" (*mitsrayim*). Cf. Lev 26.7–8; Deut 28.7. The last two clauses are parallel (see note on 3.15). **23.23** *Jebusites.* Cf. 3.17; Josh 3.10; 24.11. *Blot . . . out,* as Pharaoh has been (the same Hebrew verb rendered *cut off* in 9.15). **23.24** *Bow down . . . worship.* Cf. 20.5; Deut 28.14. *Pillars,* steles, representing deities, on which libations are poured, well attested archaeologically in Canaan; cf. 34.13; Deut 12.3. Israelite pillars are eventually forbidden (Lev 26.1; Deut 16.22; 2 Kings 18.4; 23.14). **23.25** *Bread.* Cf. Lev 26.5, 26. *Sickness,* such as God brought upon Egypt (the same Hebrew word translated *diseases* in 15.26); cf. Lev 26.16; Deut 28.21–22, 58–61. **23.26** Cf. Lev 26.9; Deut 28.4, 11; also cf. Lev 26.22 ("bereave" is the same Hebrew verb as *miscarry* here); Deut 28.18, 63. **23.27** *Terror.* Cf. 15.14–16; see note on 14.24. *Throw*

turn their backs to you. 28 And I will send the
pestilence[a] in front of you, which shall drive
out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hit-
tites from before you. 29 I will not drive them
out from before you in one year, or the land
would become desolate and the wild animals
would multiply against you. 30 Little by little I
will drive them out from before you, until you
have increased and possess the land. 31 I will
set your borders from the Red Sea[b] to the sea
of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to
the Euphrates; for I will hand over to you the
inhabitants of the land, and you shall drive
them out before you. 32 You shall make no cov-
enant with them and their gods. 33 They shall
not live in your land, or they will make you sin
against me; for if you worship their gods, it
will surely be a snare to you.

The Blood of the Covenant

24 Then he said to Moses, "Come up to
the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab, and
Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and
worship at a distance. 2 Moses alone shall come
near the Lord; but the others shall not come
near, and the people shall not come up with
him."
3 Moses came and told the people all the
words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and
all the people answered with one voice, and
said, "All the words that the Lord has spoken
we will do." 4 And Moses wrote down all the
words of the Lord. He rose early in the morn-
ing, and built an altar at the foot of the moun-
tain, and set up twelve pillars, corresponding
to the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 He sent young
men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt
offerings and sacrificed oxen as offerings of
well-being to the Lord. 6 Moses took half of
the blood and put it in basins, and half of the
blood he dashed against the altar. 7 Then he
took the book of the covenant, and read it in
the hearing of the people; and they said, "All
that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we
will be obedient." 8 Moses took the blood and
dashed it on the people, and said, "See the
blood of the covenant that the Lord has made
with you in accordance with all these words."

On the Mountain with God

9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu,
and seventy of the elders of Israel went up,
10 and they saw the God of Israel. Under his

a Or *hornets*: Meaning of Heb uncertain *b* Or *Sea of Reeds*

into confusion, as the Lord has done to Egypt (14.24, where *threw . . . into panic* is the same verb); cf. Josh 10.10; also cf. Lev 26.36–37; Deut 28.20, 28–29. *Turn their backs,* as Israel must do when it is punished (Josh 7.8, 12); cf. Lev 26.7–8; Deut 28.7; 28.25. **23.28** *Pestilence,* Hebrew *tsir'ah,* personified angel of destruction as in v. 20 and like "the destroyer" of (see note on) 12.13; in Hebrew it echoes *foe* in v. 22; cf. Deut 7.20; Josh 24.12. *Hivites . . . Hittites,* a list abridged from v. 23. **23.29** *In one year,* as in Josh 10–11, but gradually as in Josh 13; Judg 1. *Wild animals.* Cf. Lev 26.22; Lam 5.18. **23.30** *Increased,* as you began to do in Egypt (1.7, 12). *Possess,* inherit (e.g., Josh 14.1); cf. Josh 13.6–7. **23.31** *Sea of the Philistines,* the Mediterranean ("Western Sea" in Deut 11.24; "Great Sea" in Josh 1.4). *Wilderness,* the Negeb (cf. Deut 11.24; Josh 1.4). *Euphrates,* lit. "the river" (see Deut 11.24). Cf. the extent of Solomon's kingdom (1 Kings 4.21). **23.32–33** These verses are elaborated in 34.11–16; cf. Josh 23.12–13; Judg 2.2–3; and note the Gibeonites' trick in Josh 9. **23.33** *A snare,* eventually leading to disaster; cf. Judg 8.27; 1 Sam 18.21.

24.1–8 Ritual ratification of the covenant (cf. note on 19.1–9), an apparent but imprecise sequel to 19.24 (see 20.21). **24.1** *To Moses.* Cf. the address to all Israel (20.22). *To the Lord.* The Lord refers to himself in the third person as in 19.24. *Nadab, and Abihu.* Cf. 6.23. *Seventy,* a full complement (cf. 1.5). Cf. Num 11.16–17, 24–25. *Elders.* Cf. 19.7. *Worship,* lit. "bow down." *At a distance.* Cf. 20.18, 21. **24.3** *Came,* presumably prior to fulfilling the command in vv. 1–2; see note on 24.9–11. *Ordinances,* in 20.23–23.19. *Do.* Cf. v. 7; 19.8; see note on 19.1–9. The repetition of *all* suggests completion. **24.4** *Wrote down.* Cf. 17.14. The *book* (v. 7), presumably parchment since stone is not specified (as in v. 12; 31.18), may be understood to be deposited in the ark (25.16, 21) as was customary with treaty documents. *Pillars,* as witnesses (Gen 31.44–48; Josh 24.26–27); cf. note on 23.24. **24.5** *Young men,* acting as cultic assistants prior to the establishment of the hereditary priesthood (cf. 1 Sam 2.11–18). *Oxen,* rather "bulls"; the term occurs at the end of the sentence in the Hebrew, meaning that both types of offering consist of bulls. *Well-being.* See note on 20.24. The people eat the flesh of this offering (see Lev 3) so that both parties partake. **24.6** The Hebrew term translated *basins* here is never used of implements in priestly practices. *Altar,* the Lord's surrogate in the ceremony. **24.7** *Read it.* Cf. Deut 31.9–13; 2 Kings 23.1–3; Neh 8.1–8. *Be obedient,* rendered *listen* in 20.19. **24.8** *People,* or the pillars (v. 4) as their surrogates. Dashing blood, elsewhere an instrument of purification and atonement, on the two parties signifies somehow that the onus is on both; cf. Heb 9.18–22. There is a possible parallel in a periodic ceremony at Emar, in eastern Syria, in the mid-second millennium BCE. **24.9–11** A

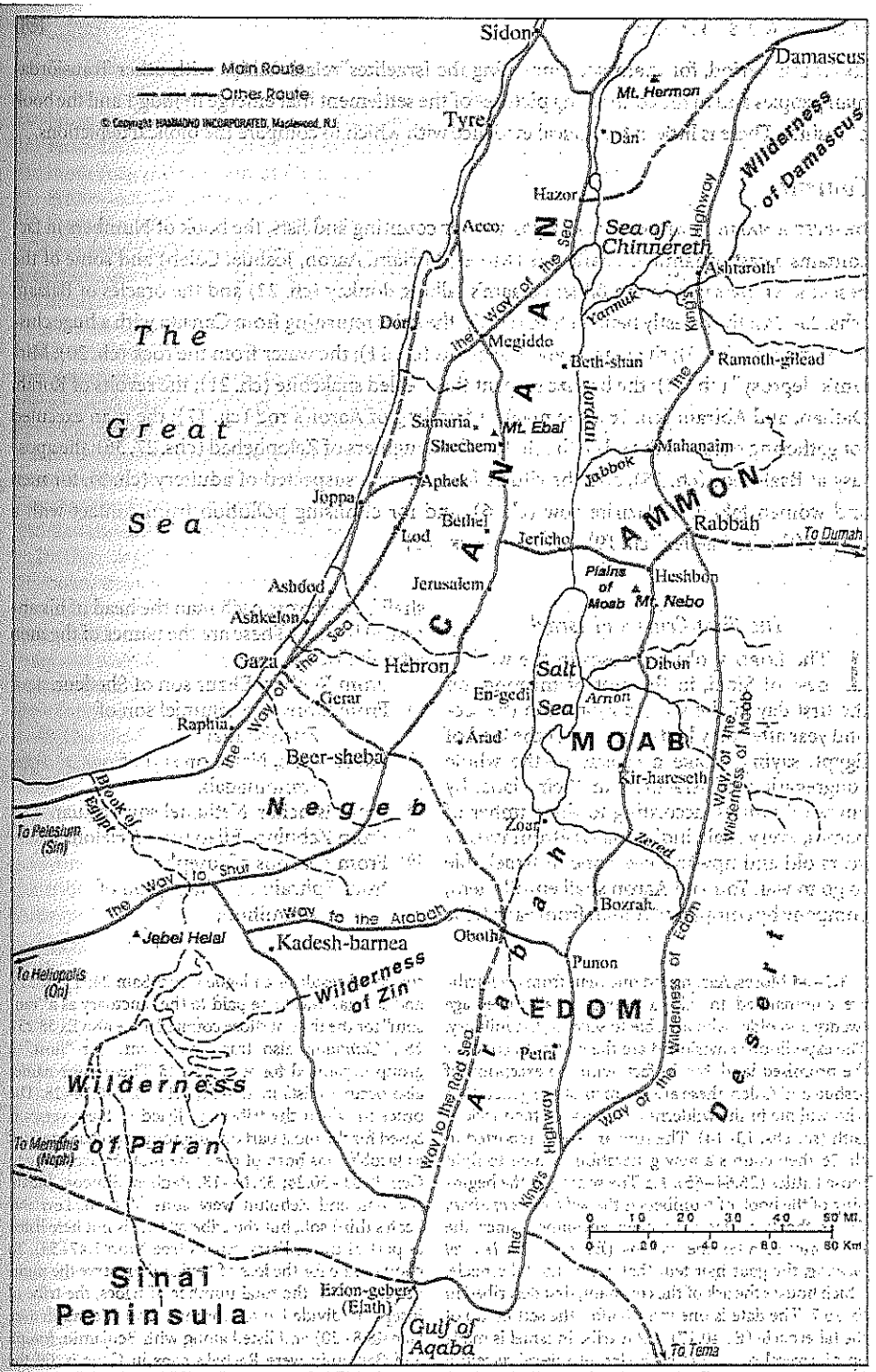
NUMBERS

NUMBERS IS THE FOURTH BOOK of the Bible and therefore the fourth in the Pentateuch ("five scrolls"), or Torah, as the first five books are known collectively. Numbers takes its English name from *Arithmoi,* the title of the book in the ancient Greek translation called the Septuagint, begun in the third century BCE. In Hebrew the book is called *Bemidbar,* "In the wilderness," a word in the first verse of the book and perhaps a more appropriate title given its contents. The book of Numbers begins with the Israelites encamped in the wilderness of Sinai and spans the forty years of the wilderness wanderings. It ends with the people on the east side of the Jordan River, in the "plains of Moab," poised for the conquest of Canaan. Lack of faith (chs. 13–14) leads to the almost complete destruction of the exodus generation, which is to be replaced by a new generation born in the wilderness and looking forward to Canaan rather than backward to Egypt.

Structure and Sources

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK follows the geographical sequence of the account as well as the change in generations over the forty years of wandering. Geographically, Numbers can be divided into three fairly neat sections: in the wilderness of Sinai, 1.1–10.10; the march through the wilderness to Transjordan, 10.11–22.1; and in the plains of Moab, 22.2–36.13. The book is also, however, divided into two sections by the two military censuses in chs. 1 and 26, which represent the doubting exodus generation and the new generation that takes its place. These two censuses, as well as several other counting episodes, have led to the impression that "numbers" are the principal topic of the book; hence its title in the Septuagint.

Modern scholars believe that the material in the Pentateuch, and therefore in the book of Numbers, was brought together from several sources. It is useful to consider two broad types of sources evident in the book of Numbers: material called "Priestly," because of its interest in cultic matters pertaining to religious ritual and genealogy, and material drawn from "old epic" sources, which has a lexical and stylistic consistency with similar material elsewhere in the Pentateuch (see Introduction to Genesis). Both Priestly and epic sections preserve ancient traditions, but most modern scholars suggest that the history of the Israelites before their settlement in Canaan was more complicated than the picture in Numbers of the twelve-tribe march from the exodus to the conquest. The biblical traditions themselves contain some ambiguity



The major places and routes that figure in the narratives of Israel's migration into Canaan (Numbers, Joshua, and Judges).

about this period, for example, concerning the Israelites' relationships with other Transjordanian peoples and in the contrasting pictures of the settlement that emerge in Judg 1 and the book of Joshua. There is little extrabiblical evidence with which to compare the biblical depictions.

Content

DESPITE A NAME THAT INDICATES a passion for counting and lists, the book of Numbers in fact contains a cast of familiar characters (Moses, Miriam, Aaron, Joshua, Caleb) and some of the best-known passages in the Bible: Balaam's talking donkey (ch. 22) and the oracles of Balaam (chs. 23–24); the priestly benediction (ch. 6); the spies returning from Canaan with a huge cluster of grapes (ch. 13); the manna and the quails (ch. 11); the water from the rock (ch. 20); Miriam's "leprosy" (ch. 12); the bronze serpent that healed snakebite (ch. 21); the revolts of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (ch. 16); the magical budding of Aaron's rod (ch. 17); the man executed for gathering sticks on the sabbath (ch. 15); the daughters of Zelophehad (chs. 27, 36); the apostasy at Baal-peor (ch. 25); and the rituals for a woman suspected of adultery (ch. 5), for men and women taking a Nazirite vow (ch. 6), and for cleansing pollution from contact with a corpse (the "red heifer," ch. 19). [JO ANN HACKETT]

The First Census of Israel

1 The LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: [2]Take a census of the whole congregation of Israelites, in their clans, by ancestral houses, according to the number of names, every male individually; [3]from twenty years old and upward, everyone in Israel able to go to war. You and Aaron shall enroll them, company by company. [4]A man from each tribe shall be with you, each man the head of his ancestral house. [5]These are the names of the men who shall assist you:

From Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur.
6 From Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.
7 From Judah, Nahshon son of Amminadab.
8 From Issachar, Nethanel son of Zuar.
9 From Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon.
10 From the sons of Joseph:
from Ephraim, Elishama son of Ammihud;

1.1–54 Moses, Aaron, and one man from each tribe are commanded to take a census of all males age twenty and older who are able to serve in the military. The expeditions envisioned are the battles to conquer the promised land, but in fact, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, these are the men of the generation who will die in the wilderness because of their lack of faith (see chs. 13–14). The similar census reported in ch. 26 then counts a new generation of men to fight those battles (26.64–65). **1.1** The setting of the beginning of the book of Numbers is the *wilderness of Sinai,* where the Israelites have been encamped since the third month after the exodus (Ex 19.1–2). *Tent of meeting,* the goat-hair tent that covers the tabernacle, which houses the ark of the covenant, first described in Ex 26.7. The date is one month after the setting up of the tabernacle (Ex 40.17). **1.2** A tribe in Israel is made up of several *clans,* and each clan of several *ancestral houses.* Each individual male counted is to be identified by ancestral house and clan within each tribe. **1.3** Ex 30.11–12 reports the belief that a military census could result in a plague (see 2 Sam 24; 1 Chr 21), and so a tax was to be paid to the sanctuary as a "ransom" for the lives of those counted. (See also Ex 38.25–28.) *Company,* also translated "army" or "host," a group organized for war. **1.5–15** These same names also occur in lists in 2.3–31; 7.12–83; 10.14–28. The order in which the tribes are listed in these verses is based for the most part on subgroupings characterized as Jacob's sons born of the same mother, according to Gen 29.31–30.24; 35.16–18. Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun were sons of Leah. Levi was Leah's third son, but the tribe of Levi is not here listed as part of the military census (see Num 1.47–54). To compensate for the loss of Levi and preserve the number twelve for the total number of tribes, the tribe of Joseph is divided into Ephraim and Manasseh (see Gen 48.8–20) and listed along with Benjamin. Joseph and Benjamin were Rachel's sons in Genesis. Of the final four tribes, Dan and Naphtali were the sons of Rachel's maid Bilhah, and Gad and Asher were the sons of Leah's maid Zilpah. (Naphtali and Asher have

from Manasseh, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.
11 From Benjamin, Abidan son of Gideoni.
12 From Dan, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.
13 From Asher, Pagiel son of Ochran.
14 From Gad, Eliasaph son of Deuel.
15 From Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan.
[16]These were the ones chosen from the congregation, the leaders of their ancestral tribes, the heads of the divisions of Israel.

17 Moses and Aaron took these men who had been designated by name, [18]and on the first day of the second month they assembled the whole congregation together. They registered themselves in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names from twenty years old and upward, individually, [19]as the LORD commanded Moses. So he enrolled them in the wilderness of Sinai.

20 The descendants of Reuben, Israel's firstborn, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, individually, every male from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: [21]those enrolled of the tribe of Reuben were forty-six thousand five hundred.

22 The descendants of Simeon, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, those of them that were numbered, according to the number of names, individually, every male from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: [23]those enrolled of the tribe of Simeon were fifty-nine thousand three hundred.

24 The descendants of Gad, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: [25]those enrolled of the tribe of Gad were forty-five thousand six hundred fifty.

26 The descendants of Judah, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: [27]those enrolled of the tribe of Judah were seventy-four thousand six hundred.

28 The descendants of Issachar, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: [29]those enrolled of the tribe of Issachar were fifty-four thousand four hundred.

30 The descendants of Zebulun, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: [31]those enrolled of the tribe of Zebulun were fifty-seven thousand four hundred.

32 The descendants of Joseph, namely, the descendants of Ephraim, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: [33]those enrolled of the tribe of Ephraim were forty thousand five hundred.

34 The descendants of Manasseh, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: [35]those enrolled of the tribe of Manasseh were thirty-two thousand two hundred.

36 The descendants of Benjamin, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: [37]those enrolled of the tribe of Benjamin were thirty-five thousand four hundred.

38 The descendants of Dan, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: [39]those enrolled of the tribe of Dan were sixty-two thousand seven hundred.

40 The descendants of Asher, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: [41]those enrolled of the tribe of Asher were forty-one thousand five hundred.

42 The descendants of Naphtali, their lineage, in their clans, by their ancestral houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war: [43]those enrolled of the tribe of

switched positions in the list here.) **1.17–46** The tribes are listed in the same order as in vv. 5–15, except that Gad has shifted position. Gad occupies the third slot in this list, right after Reuben and Simeon. This shift seems to be based on Gad's position in the arrangement of tribes in the camp described in ch. 2. There Gad is joined with Simeon and Reuben on the south side (see 2.10–16). The total of 603,550 military men (v. 46) has seemed unrealistically high to commentators, as has the similar number, 601,730, in the second

Naphtali were fifty-three thousand four hundred.

44 These are those who were enrolled, whom Moses and Aaron enrolled with the help of the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each representing his ancestral house: 45 So the whole number of the Israelites, by their ancestral houses, from twenty years old and upward, everyone able to go to war in Israel—46 their whole number was six hundred three thousand five hundred fifty. 47 The Levites, however, were not numbered by their ancestral tribe along with them.

48 The LORD had said to Moses: 49 Only the tribe of Levi you shall not enroll, and you shall not take a census of them with the other Israelites. 50 Rather you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the covenant,[a] and over all its equipment, and over all that belongs to it; they are to carry the tabernacle and all its equipment, and they shall tend it, and shall camp around the tabernacle. 51 When the tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. And any outsider who comes near shall be put to death. 52 The other Israelites shall camp in their respective regimental camps, by companies; 53 but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the covenant,[a] that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the Israelites; and the Levites shall perform the guard duty of the tabernacle of the covenant.[a] 54 The Israelites did so; they did just as the LORD commanded Moses.

The Order of Encampment and Marching

2 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2 The Israelites shall camp each in their respective regiments, under ensigns by their ancestral houses; they shall camp facing the tent of meeting on every side. 3 Those to camp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be of the regimental encampment of Judah by companies. The leader of the people of Judah shall be Nahshon son of Amminadab, 4 with a company as enrolled of seventy-four thousand six hundred. 5 Those to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar. The leader of the Issacharites shall be Nethanel son of Zuar, 6 with a company as enrolled of fifty-four thousand four hundred. 7 Then the tribe of Zebulun: The leader of the Zebulunites shall be Eliab son of Helon, 8 with a company as enrolled of fifty-seven thousand four hundred. 9 The total enrollment of the camp of Judah, by companies, is one hundred eighty-six thousand four hundred. They shall set out first on the march.

10 On the south side shall be the regimental encampment of Reuben by companies. The leader of the Reubenites shall be Elizur son of Shedeur, 11 with a company as enrolled of forty-six thousand five hundred. 12 And those

a Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

census in ch. 26 (v. 51). **1.47–54** The tribe of Levi is to be considered separately from the "landed" tribes and dedicated entirely to service at the tabernacle (see also, e.g., Deut 10.8–9; 12.12; Josh 13.14, 33). Levi is left out of the tribal list in the poem in Judg 5. **1.50, 53** The tabernacle is called *tabernacle of the covenant* elsewhere only in Ex 38.21; Num 10.11. **1.51** *Outsider*, here anyone who is not a Levite (see also 3.10, 38; 18.7; cf. 16.40). **1.52** The word translated *regiment* probably originally referred to a standard or banner, that was used to mark a military unit and then was extended to denote the unit itself, as here (cf. the translation, *standard*, of the same word in 10.14, 18, 22, 25). In fifth-century BCE texts from the Jewish colony at Elephantine in Egypt, this word can even represent a larger legal entity that includes the families of military men. **1.53** The *wrath* of the Lord would be brought on by any nonlevitical trespasser who came into contact with the tabernacle. The Levites are literally its guards. **2.1–34** The tabernacle within the tent of meeting stands at the center of the camp in this description (cf. Ex 33.7–11, where the tent is set up outside the camp). At each of the cardinal points around the tent are three tribes, separated from the tent by Levites (v. 17; 1.52–53). Each group of three is arranged in a camp named for the dominant tribe of the three. The order in which they camp is also the order in which they march, the tribes on the east leading the march. The sequence in which the tribes are named in this chapter is based on the genealogically organized list in 1.5–15 with minor changes; see vv. 3–9, 10–16. The leaders are those in the lists in 1.5–15; 7.12–83; 10.14–28. **2.2** *Ensigns*, or "signs," here suggests that each ancestral house had its own symbol that could be displayed. **2.3–9** Judah is the preeminent tribe in this scheme: it is the first tribe listed on the east side of the tabernacle and so leads the march. Judah takes with it Issachar and Zebulun from the list in ch. 1 to make up the *camp of Judah* (v. 9). **2.10–16** The tribes on the south side are next, headed by Reuben, the traditional firstborn. Since Judah is now at the head of the entire list, the *camp of Reuben* (v. 16) includes Gad in the position Judah held in the list in ch. 1. Gad is the tribe to be moved up either because Reuben and Gad are associated as Transjordanian tribes or because the earlier tribes have all been "Leah" tribes (see 1.5–15) and Gad is the firstborn of

to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon. The leader of the Simeonites shall be Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, 13 with a company as enrolled of fifty-nine thousand three hundred. 14 Then the tribe of Gad: The leader of the Gadites shall be Eliasaph son of Reuel, 15 with a company as enrolled of forty-five thousand six hundred fifty. 16 The total enrollment of the camp of Reuben, by companies, is one hundred fifty-one thousand four hundred fifty. They shall set out second.

17 The tent of meeting, with the camp of the Levites, shall set out in the center of the camps; they shall set out just as they camp, each in position, by their regiments.

18 On the west side shall be the regimental encampment of Ephraim by companies. The leader of the people of Ephraim shall be Elishama son of Ammihud, 19 with a company as enrolled of forty thousand five hundred. 20 Next to him shall be the tribe of Manasseh. The leader of the people of Manasseh shall be Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, 21 with a company as enrolled of thirty-two thousand two hundred. 22 Then the tribe of Benjamin: The leader of the Benjaminites shall be Abidan son of Gideoni, 23 with a company as enrolled of thirty-five thousand four hundred. 24 The total enrollment of the camp of Ephraim, by companies, is one hundred eight thousand one hundred. They shall set out third on the march.

25 On the north side shall be the regimental encampment of Dan by companies. The leader of the Danites shall be Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, 26 with a company as enrolled of sixty-two thousand seven hundred. 27 Those to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher. The leader of the Asherites shall be Pagiel son of Ochran, 28 with a company as enrolled of forty-one thousand five hundred. 29 Then the tribe of Naphtali: The leader of the Naphtalites shall be Ahira son of Enan, 30 with a company as enrolled of fifty-three thousand four hundred. 31 The total enrollment of the camp of Dan is one hundred fifty-seven thousand six hundred. They shall set out last, by companies.[a]

32 This was the enrollment of the Israelites by their ancestral houses; the total enrollment in the camps by their companies was six hundred three thousand five hundred fifty. 33 Just as the LORD had commanded Moses, the Levites were not enrolled among the other Israelites.

34 The Israelites did just as the LORD had commanded Moses: They camped by regiments, and they set out the same way, everyone by clans, according to ancestral houses.

The Sons of Aaron

3 This is the lineage of Aaron and Moses at the time when the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. 2 These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar; 3 these are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he ordained to minister as priests. 4 Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD when they offered unholy fire before the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children. Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests in the lifetime of their father Aaron.

The Duties of the Levites

5 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 6 Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, so that they may assist him. 7 They shall perform duties for him and for the whole congregation in front of the tent of meeting, doing service at the tabernacle; 8 they shall be in charge of all the furnishings

a Compare verses 9, 16, 24; Heb *by their regiments*

Leah's maid Zilpah (Gen 30.9–11). **2.14** For *Reuel*, read "Deuel," following 1.14 and several ancient manuscripts. **2.18–24** Ephraim heads the western camp because in Genesis he became the dominant son of Jacob's favorite son, Joseph (Gen 48.13–20). **2.25–31** Dan is first in the northern camp because he was the eldest son born to a concubine of Jacob (Bilhah, Gen 30.1–6). **2.33** See 1.48–49.

3.1–51 The duties, arrangement, and numbers of the tribe of Levi. **3.1** *Aaron* is listed before *Moses* here because Aaron is the firstborn. This verse is set at *Mount Sinai* (cf. 1.1; 3.14), when Nadab and Abihu were alive (see v. 4). In reverting to Mount Sinai for a few verses, the narrative implies that the information in vv. 5–13 was already understood at the time the rest of the activity in this chapter takes place. **3.2** See also Ex 6.23. **3.3** *He*. It was Moses who ordained the sons of Aaron (Lev 8.30; see also Ex 29.21; 30.30; 40.12–15; cf. Lev 8.12). **3.4** See Lev 10.1–2. **3.5–10** A distinction is made between Aaron and his descendants (the anointed priests) and the rest of the tribe of Levi, to which both Aaron and Moses belong. The rest of the Levites will *assist* (v. 6) Aaron and his descendants. **3.7–8** One of the *duties* of the Levites is to guard the

of the tent of meeting, and attend to the duties
for the Israelites as they do service at the taber-
nacle. 9 You shall give the Levites to Aaron and
his descendants; they are unreservedly given
to him from among the Israelites. 10 But you
shall make a register of Aaron and his descen-
dants; it is they who shall attend to the priest-
hood, and any outsider who comes near shall
be put to death.
11 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
12 I hereby accept the Levites from among the
Israelites as substitutes for all the firstborn
that open the womb among the Israelites. The
Levites shall be mine, 13 for all the firstborn are
mine; when I killed all the firstborn in the land
of Egypt, I consecrated for my own all the
firstborn in Israel, both human and animal;
they shall be mine. I am the LORD.

A Census of the Levites

14 Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the
wilderness of Sinai, saying: 15 Enroll the Le-
vites by ancestral houses and by clans. You
shall enroll every male from a month old and
upward. 16 So Moses enrolled them according
to the word of the LORD, as he was com-
manded. 17 The following were the sons of
Levi, by their names: Gershon, Kohath, and
Merari. 18 These are the names of the sons of
Gershon by their clans: Libni and Shimei.
19 The sons of Kohath by their clans: Amram,
Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. 20 The sons of Me-
rari by their clans: Mahli and Mushi. These are
the clans of the Levites, by their ancestral
houses.
21 To Gershon belonged the clan of the Lib-
nites and the clan of the Shimeites; these were
the clans of the Gershonites. 22 Their enroll-
ment, counting all the males from a month
old and upward, was seven thousand five hun-
dred. 23 The clans of the Gershonites were to
camp behind the tabernacle on the west,
24 with Eliasaph son of Lael as head of the an-
cestral house of the Gershonites. 25 The re-
sponsibility of the sons of Gershon in the tent
of meeting was to be the tabernacle, the tent
with its covering, the screen for the entrance
of the tent of meeting, 26 the hangings of the
court, the screen for the entrance of the court
that is around the tabernacle and the altar, and
its cords—all the service pertaining to these.
27 To Kohath belonged the clan of the Am-
ramites, the clan of the Izharites, the clan of
the Hebronites, and the clan of the Uzzielites;
these are the clans of the Kohathites. 28 Count-
ing all the males, from a month old and up-
ward, there were eight thousand six hundred,
attending to the duties of the sanctuary. 29 The
clans of the Kohathites were to camp on the
south side of the tabernacle, 30 with Elizaphan
son of Uzziel as head of the ancestral house of
the clans of the Kohathites. 31 Their responsi-

tabernacle from intrusion. **3.9** Instead of *to him,* several manuscripts have "to me," as in 8.16; see also 3.12; 18.6. **3.10** *Outsider.* See 1.51. **3.11–13** See 8.16–18. **3.12** Earlier laws had required that human *firstborn* (males are usually specified) be consecrated to the Lord (to a life of religious service), redeemed, or perhaps even sacrificed, presumably to ensure continued fertility (see Ex 13.2, 11–15; 22.29b–30; 34.19–20; see also Num 18.15).

3.14–39 Census of the Levites and recording of their duties. **3.14** This verse returns to the narrative's present time and place, in the *wilderness of Sinai.* **3.15–16** Cf. 1.47–49. The prohibition apparently does not extend to a separate census of the Levites. **3.15** *By ancestral houses and by clans.* Note the reverse order in 1.2 and throughout ch. 1. Unlike the earlier military census, which counted males twenty and older, this census of the Levites counts *every male from a month old and upward,* because they will be substitutes for Israelite firstborn males a month old and upward (vv. 40–41). One month seems to be the age at which personhood was believed to begin; see Lev 27.6. **3.17–20** See Gen 46.11; Ex 6.16–19. **3.21–39** The levitical clans are to encamp between the tabernacle and the Israelites on three sides of the tabernacle and are given the responsibility to protect and to transport the tabernacle and its accessories, including the tent of meeting. **3.21–26** The first levitical clan discussed is the Gershonites, see v. 17. **3.23, 25–26** The *Gershonites* encamp on the *west* side of the tabernacle and have custody over the accessories made of fabric (see also 4.25–26): the *tabernacle,* the innermost tent housing the ark, made of blue (or violet), purple, and crimson linen curtains with a cherubim design (Ex 26.1); the *tent* of meeting, made of goat-hair curtains (Ex 26.7), and its ram-skin and leather *covering* (Ex 26.14); the linen *screen* for the entrance to the tent (Ex 26.36); the linen *hangings* for the court surrounding the tabernacle (Ex 27.9); and the linen *screen* for the entrance to the court (Ex 27.16) and its *cords* (Ex 39.40). **3.27–32** *Kohathites.* See v. 17. **3.28** *Eight thousand six hundred.* The Septuagint has "eight thousand three hundred," which accords with the total of twenty-two thousand reported in v. 39. The difference between the Hebrew words for "six" and "three" is only one consonant. **3.29, 31** The Kohathites camp on the *south side* of the tabernacle and have custody over the most sacred items: the *ark* itself (Ex 25.10–22) and its immediate surroundings—the *table* that holds the bread of the Presence (Ex 25.23–30; 35.13; 39.36); the *lampstand* (Ex 25.31–40); the two

bility was to be the ark, the table, the lamp-
stand, the altars, the vessels of the sanctuary
with which the priests minister, and the
screen—all the service pertaining to these.
32 Eleazar son of Aaron the priest was to be
chief over the leaders of the Levites, and to
have oversight of those who had charge of the
sanctuary.
33 To Merari belonged the clan of the Mah-
lites and the clan of the Mushites; these are the
clans of Merari. 34 Their enrollment, counting
all the males from a month old and upward,
was six thousand two hundred. 35 The head of
the ancestral house of the clans of Merari was
Zuriel son of Abihail; they were to camp on
the north side of the tabernacle. 36 The respon-
sibility assigned to the sons of Merari was to
be the frames of the tabernacle, the bars, the
pillars, the bases, and all their accessories—all
the service pertaining to these; 37 also the pil-
lars of the court all around, with their bases
and pegs and cords.
38 Those who were to camp in front of the
tabernacle on the east—in front of the tent of
meeting toward the east—were Moses and
Aaron and Aaron's sons, having charge of the
rites within the sanctuary, whatever had to be
done for the Israelites; and any outsider who
came near was to be put to death. 39 The total
enrollment of the Levites whom Moses and
Aaron enrolled at the commandment of the
LORD, by their clans, all the males from a
month old and upward, was twenty-two thou-
sand.

The Redemption of the Firstborn

40 Then the LORD said to Moses: Enroll all the
firstborn males of the Israelites, from a month
old and upward, and count their names. 41 But
you shall accept the Levites for me—I am the
LORD—as substitutes for all the firstborn
among the Israelites, and the livestock of the
Levites as substitutes for all the firstborn
among the livestock of the Israelites. 42 So
Moses enrolled all the firstborn among the Is-
raelites, as the LORD commanded him. 43 The
total enrollment, all the firstborn males from a
month old and upward, counting the number
of names, was twenty-two thousand two hun-
dred seventy-three.
44 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
45 Accept the Levites as substitutes for all the
firstborn among the Israelites, and the live-
stock of the Levites as substitutes for their live-
stock; and the Levites shall be mine. I am the
LORD. 46 As the price of redemption of the two
hundred seventy-three of the firstborn of the
Israelites, over and above the number of the
Levites, 47 you shall accept five shekels apiece,
reckoning by the shekel of the sanctuary, a
shekel of twenty gerahs. 48 Give to Aaron and
his sons the money by which the excess num-
ber of them is redeemed. 49 So Moses took the
redemption money from those who were over
and above those redeemed by the Levites;
50 from the firstborn of the Israelites he took
the money, one thousand three hundred sixty-
five shekels, reckoned by the shekel of the

horned *altars,* one covered with bronze in the court (Ex 27.1–8) and one covered with gold for burning incense (Ex 30.1–10); the *vessels of the sanctuary,* also translated "utensils" (e.g., Ex 27.19; 30.17–21, 26–29; 37.16; 38.3), enumerated in Num 4.5–15; and the *screen* (not one of the screens in vv. 25–26, but rather the curtain that sets off the holiest portion of the tabernacle, otherwise always called the "curtain," the "screening curtain," the "curtain for the screen," or the "curtain for screening," e.g., Ex 26.31–35; 35.12; 39.34; 40.21). **3.32** *Eleazar* (see also 4.16), like Aaron and Moses, is a Kohathite (Ex 6.16, 18, 20, 23). **3.33–37** Merarites; see v. 17. **3.35–36** The Merarites camp on the *north side* of the tabernacle and have custody over the supporting structure of the tabernacle, i.e., the wooden *frames, bars, pillars,* silver *bases,* and *accessories* (Ex 26.15–30; 35.10–11; 39.33; 40.18; see also Num 4.31), and of the surrounding court, its wooden *pillars,* its bronze *bases* and *pegs,* and its *cords* (Ex 27.10–19; 35.17–18; 39.40). **3.38** The preeminent position to the *east* of the tabernacle is taken by Moses, Aaron, and the descendants of Aaron, set apart from the other Levites (see 3.5–10). *Outsider.* See 1.51. **3.39** *Twenty-two thousand.* The numbers in the text actually total twenty-two thousand, three hundred; see 3.28.

3.40–51 The Levites are substitutes for firstborn males (3.14–15). **3.41** Even the Levites' *livestock* are substituted for the livestock of the firstborn (see also v. 45, but cf. 18.17). **3.43** The number of firstborn males (22,273) is very low compared to the census numbers reported in 1.17–46. **3.46–48** Since each Levite could redeem only one firstborn male, a ransom of *five shekels* each had to be paid for the 273 above and beyond the number of Levites (unless that number should actually be 300 higher; see vv. 28, 39). Archaeological evidence suggests that the shekel in ancient Israel weighed about 11.4 grams, though it is possible that there were two systems at work simultaneously, as in ancient Mesopotamia, and that the *shekel of the sanctuary* (v. 47) was heavier than the common shekel (see also the "shekels by the king's weight" in 2 Sam 14.26). **3.49–50** The ransom money will be paid by the firstborn (v. 50) or by a portion of them (v. 49).

sanctuary; [51]and Moses gave the redemption
money to Aaron and his sons, according to the
word of the LORD, as the LORD had com-
manded Moses.

The Kohathites

4 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, say-
ing: [2]Take a census of the Kohathites sepa-
rate from the other Levites, by their clans and
their ancestral houses, [3]from thirty years old
up to fifty years old, all who qualify to do work
relating to the tent of meeting. [4]The service of
the Kohathites relating to the tent of meeting
concerns the most holy things.

5 When the camp is to set out, Aaron and
his sons shall go in and take down the screen-
ing curtain, and cover the ark of the covenant[a]
with it; [6]then they shall put on it a covering of
fine leather,[b] and spread over that a cloth all of
blue, and shall put its poles in place. [7]Over the
table of the bread of the Presence they shall
spread a blue cloth, and put on it the plates,
the dishes for incense, the bowls, and the
flagons for the drink offering; the regular
bread also shall be on it; [8]then they shall
spread over them a crimson cloth, and cover it
with a covering of fine leather,[b] and shall put
its poles in place. [9]They shall take a blue cloth,
and cover the lampstand for the light, with its
lamps, its snuffers, its trays, and all the vessels
for oil with which it is supplied; [10]and they
shall put it with all its utensils in a covering of
fine leather,[b] and put it on the carrying frame.
[11]Over the golden altar they shall spread a
blue cloth, and cover it with a covering of fine
leather,[b] and shall put its poles in place; [12]and
they shall take all the utensils of the service
that are used in the sanctuary, and put them in
a blue cloth, and cover them with a covering of
fine leather,[b] and put them on the carrying
frame. [13]They shall take away the ashes from
the altar, and spread a purple cloth over it;
[14]and they shall put on it all the utensils of the
altar, which are used for the service there, the
firepans, the forks, the shovels, and the basins,
all the utensils of the altar; and they shall
spread on it a covering of fine leather,[b] and
shall put its poles in place. [15]When Aaron and
his sons have finished covering the sanctuary
and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, as the
camp sets out, after that the Kohathites shall
come to carry these, but they must not touch
the holy things, or they will die. These are the
things of the tent of meeting that the Kohath-
ites are to carry.

16 Eleazar son of Aaron the priest shall have
charge of the oil for the light, the fragrant in-
cense, the regular grain offering, and the
anointing oil, the oversight of all the taberna-
cle and all that is in it, in the sanctuary and in
its utensils.

17 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and
Aaron, saying: [18]You must not let the tribe of
the clans of the Kohathites be destroyed from
among the Levites. [19]This is how you must
deal with them in order that they may live and
not die when they come near to the most holy
things: Aaron and his sons shall go in and as-
sign each to a particular task or burden. [20]But
the Kohathites[c] must not go in to look on the
holy things even for a moment; otherwise they
will die.

The Gershonites and Merarites

21 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
[22]Take a census of the Gershonites also, by
their ancestral houses and by their clans;

a Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth* *b* Meaning of Heb uncertain *c* Heb *they*

4.1–49 The second levitical census, to determine the number of Levites between the ages of thirty and fifty, the years during which they are qualified to perform their priestly duties (but cf. 8.24–26). **4.2–4** In 3.14–37 Gershon was counted first because Gershon is the "firstborn" (3.17, 21–26). Here, the Kohathites are counted first and are singled out *from the other Levites* because they have custody over *the most holy things* (v. 4; see also 3.31). **4.5–14** The most holy things are prepared for the march by Aaron and his sons. **4.5** *Screening curtain.* See note on 3.29, 31. **4.6** The *poles* for carrying the ark (Ex 25.13–15). **4.7** *Table of the bread of the Presence.* See note on 3.29, 31. The *plates . . . drink offering.* See Ex 25.29; 37.16. The *regular bread* is the bread that is continually on the table (Ex 25.30; Lev 24.5–9). **4.8** *Poles,* for carrying the table (Ex 25.28). **4.9** *Lampstand.* See 3.31. **4.11** *Golden altar,* for burning incense. See note on 3.29, 31 (its *poles,* Ex 30.4–5). **4.12** The *utensils of the service that are used in the sanctuary* are those that are used inside the tent itself and are most sacred (see 3.31). The *blue* (or violet) *cloth* and *fine leather* indicate the very sacred status of these items, which are placed within the tent while the camp is at rest. **4.13–14** The *altar* here is the bronze altar for sacrifice in the court that surrounds the tabernacle (see note on 3.29, 31) with its *utensils* (Ex 27.3) and its *poles* (Ex 27.6–7). **4.15** *Or they will die.* See Ex 19.20–24 (cf. Ex 19.12–13); 1 Sam 6.19 (Hebrew in text note *b*); 2 Sam 6.6–15. **4.16** See 3.32. **4.19** *Burden,* i.e., that which he is to transport. **4.21–28** The census of the

[23]from thirty years old up to fifty years old you
shall enroll them, all who qualify to do work in
the tent of meeting. [24]This is the service of the
clans of the Gershonites, in serving and bear-
ing burdens: [25]They shall carry the curtains of
the tabernacle, and the tent of meeting with its
covering, and the outer covering of fine
leather[a] that is on top of it, and the screen for
the entrance of the tent of meeting, [26]and the
hangings of the court, and the screen for the
entrance of the gate of the court that is around
the tabernacle and the altar, and their cords,
and all the equipment for their service; and
they shall do all that needs to be done with re-
gard to them. [27]All the service of the Gershon-
ites shall be at the command of Aaron and his
sons, in all that they are to carry, and in all that
they have to do; and you shall assign to their
charge all that they are to carry. [28]This is the
service of the clans of the Gershonites relating
to the tent of meeting, and their responsibili-
ties are to be under the oversight of Ithamar
son of Aaron the priest.

29 As for the Merarites, you shall enroll
them by their clans and their ancestral houses;
[30]from thirty years old up to fifty years old you
shall enroll them, everyone who qualifies to do
the work of the tent of meeting. [31]This is what
they are charged to carry, as the whole of their
service in the tent of meeting: the frames of
the tabernacle, with its bars, pillars, and bases,
[32]and the pillars of the court all around with
their bases, pegs, and cords, with all their
equipment and all their related service; and
you shall assign by name the objects that they
are required to carry. [33]This is the service of
the clans of the Merarites, the whole of their
service relating to the tent of meeting, under
the hand of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.

Census of the Levites

34 So Moses and Aaron and the leaders of the
congregation enrolled the Kohathites, by their
clans and their ancestral houses, [35]from thirty
years old up to fifty years old, everyone who
qualified for work relating to the tent of meet-
ing; [36]and their enrollment by clans was two
thousand seven hundred fifty. [37]This was the
enrollment of the clans of the Kohathites, all
who served at the tent of meeting, whom
Moses and Aaron enrolled according to the
commandment of the LORD by Moses.

38 The enrollment of the Gershonites, by
their clans and their ancestral houses, [39]from
thirty years old up to fifty years old, everyone
who qualified for work relating to the tent of
meeting— [40]their enrollment by their clans
and their ancestral houses was two thousand
six hundred thirty. [41]This was the enrollment
of the clans of the Gershonites, all who served
at the tent of meeting, whom Moses and
Aaron enrolled according to the command-
ment of the LORD.

42 The enrollment of the clans of the Mer-
arites, by their clans and their ancestral houses,
[43]from thirty years old up to fifty years old,
everyone who qualified for work relating to the
tent of meeting— [44]their enrollment by their
clans was three thousand two hundred. [45]This
is the enrollment of the clans of the Merarites,
whom Moses and Aaron enrolled according to
the commandment of the LORD by Moses.

46 All those who were enrolled of the Le-
vites, whom Moses and Aaron and the leaders
of Israel enrolled, by their clans and their an-
cestral houses, [47]from thirty years old up to
fifty years old, everyone who qualified to do
the work of service and the work of bearing
burdens relating to the tent of meeting, [48]their
enrollment was eight thousand five hundred
eighty. [49]According to the commandment of
the LORD through Moses they were appointed
to their several tasks of serving or carrying;
thus they were enrolled by him, as the LORD
commanded Moses.

Unclean Persons

5 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2]Com-
mand the Israelites to put out of the camp
everyone who is leprous,[b] or has a discharge,
and everyone who is unclean through contact

a Meaning of Heb uncertain *b* A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

Gershonites aged thirty to fifty and the items they are to transport; see 3.21–26. **4.28** As Eleazar is supervisor for the Kohathites and any work having to do with the tabernacle itself, Aaron's other living son, *Ithamar* (see 3.1–4), is responsible for the Gershonites and the Merarites (v. 33) and the rest of the levitical service. **4.29–33** The census of the Merarites aged thirty to fifty and the items they are to transport; see 3.33–37. **4.33** See v. 28. **4.36, 40, 44, 48** The numbers here refer only to male Levites aged thirty to fifty; cf. 3.22, 28, 34, 39.

5.1–4 The entire encampment is treated as sacred because of the presence of the tabernacle, the place, the Lord says, *where I dwell among them* (v. 3). Any impurity, therefore, that is "contagious" must be kept

25 Then Balaam got up and went back to
his place, and Balak also went his way.

Worship of Baal of Peor

25 While Israel was staying at Shittim, the
people began to have sexual relations
with the women of Moab. 2 These invited the
people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the
people ate and bowed down to their gods.
3 Thus Israel yoked itself to the Baal of Peor,
and the LORD's anger was kindled against Is-
rael. 4 The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the
chiefs of the people, and impale them in the
sun before the LORD, in order that the fierce
anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel."
5 And Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each
of you shall kill any of your people who have
yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor."

6 Just then one of the Israelites came and
brought a Midianite woman into his family, in
the sight of Moses and in the sight of the
whole congregation of the Israelites, while
they were weeping at the entrance of the tent
of meeting. 7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar,
son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he got up and
left the congregation. Taking a spear in his
hand, 8 he went after the Israelite man into the
tent, and pierced the two of them, the Israelite
and the woman, through the belly. So the
plague was stopped among the people of Is-
rael. 9 Nevertheless those that died by the
plague were twenty-four thousand.

10 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
11 "Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the
priest, has turned back my wrath from the Is-
raelites by manifesting such zeal among them

tamia or specifically Babylonia, used here along with Assyria. *He also shall perish forever.* See v. 20.

25.1–18 This chapter is a combination of two different stories about Israelite men and foreign women: one in vv. 1–5 involving Moabite women, sacrifices, and the Baal of Peor and another in vv. 6–15 involving an apparent marriage between a Midianite woman and a Simeonite man. The two are combined by vv. 16–18, and the combined narrative is known to 31.8; 15–16; Josh 22.17; Ps 106.28–31. **25.1–5** See also Deut 4.3–4; Hos 9.10. **25.1–2** *Shittim,* "the acacias." Site unknown. See the full name Abel-shittim in 33.49, there located in the plains of Moab where the Israelites have camped since 22.1. See also Josh 2.1; 3.1; Mic 6.5 (for Gilgal, see Josh 4.19–24). Shittim is the place where the conquest of the land west of the Jordan begins. *Began.* By a change in the vowels this word could read "defiled themselves." *To have sexual relations with,* lit. "to prostitute themselves with," which phrase can be used of sexual relations or of religious apostasy. *The women of Moab.* Cf. vv. 17–18; 31.15–16. *Sacrifices of their gods,* or "god" (the same Hebrew word can be used for both singular and plural) since only one god is mentioned in v. 3; see Ps 106.28–31, where these sacrifices are said to be part of a cult of the dead. *The people ate,* i.e., they participated in the sacrifices; see, e.g., Ex 32.6; Lev 7.11–18; 1 Sam 1.4, 9. Cf. vv. 1–2; Ex 34.15–16. **25.3** *Baal,* lit. "lord," originally an epithet that came to be used as the equivalent of a personal name for the Syrian storm god Hadad (cf. the Aramean king's name Hadadezer, "Hadad is help," 2 Sam 8.3–12). *Peor* is a place-name; see 23.28. **25.4** *Impale,* sometimes translated "crucify" or "expose." The narrative nowhere states that the execution of the *chiefs of the people* takes place, unless v. 8 is the equivalent. **25.5** Moses' command to the *judges of Israel* (some ancient translations have "tribes of Israel"; the Hebrew words for "tribes" and "judges" differ by only one consonant) is not the same as the Lord's command in v. 4. Here Moses asks only that the guilty parties be executed. Again, there is no indication in the narrative that this was done. **25.6–15** See also Josh 22.17–18; Ps 106.28–31. **25.6** *Into his family,* lit. "to his brothers." For "brother" as kin in general, see, e.g., 16.10; Gen 13.8; 29.12. What was the offense involved in this story? Perhaps simply bringing home, i.e., marrying, a Midianite woman. That it was done *in the sight of Moses* takes on a special significance then. Even though Moses was aware of the offense, he did nothing about it. Vv. 6–18 are an anti-Midianite story used also to elevate Aaron's family over Moses; see notes on 12.2; 16.3; 16.40. Moses could hardly punish an Israelite man for marrying a Midianite woman when he had done so himself (see 10.29–32); there is more than one attitude toward intermarriage in the Hebrew Bible; cf. Ex 34.15–16; Deut 7.2–4; Josh 23.12–13. Although the reason is not given until v. 8, the people were apparently *weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting* because of a plague. Once the two stories in this chapter are combined, the plague becomes a punishment for the worship of the Baal of Peor (see v. 18 [a third punishment, the ones in vv. 4–5 apparently not having been carried out]), and the people are weeping before the tent in supplication to the Lord (see 7.89; 16.16–18). **25.7** *Phinehas son of Eleazar.* See Ex 6.23–25; Num 20.22–29. **25.8** The Hebrew word for *tent* here is not the usual one. In fact, this word is used in the Hebrew Bible only here. The meaning is uncertain, but it was probably a domed tent; it has been suggested that this term is an alternate word for the tabernacle. *Pierced the two of them,* i.e., at once, implying sexual intercourse or some positioning in which the two bodies could be pierced with one thrust of the spear. *Through the belly.* The Hebrew is difficult but seems to mean "through *her* belly." The Hebrew word for "belly" here, though, is very similar to the word for a special tent earlier in this verse, and one ancient translation has "in the tent" at this point. **25.8–9** *Plague.* See v. 6. **25.10–13** The event becomes the grounds for praise of the Aaronite priestly family (see 1 Chr 6.3–15, 49–53) and an indirect criticism of Moses, who apparently failed to

on my behalf that in my jealousy I did not
consume the Israelites. 12 Therefore say, I
hereby grant him my covenant of peace. 13 It
shall be for him and for his descendants after
him a covenant of perpetual priesthood, be-
cause he was zealous for his God, and made
atonement for the Israelites."

14 The name of the slain Israelite man, who
was killed with the Midianite woman, was
Zimri son of Salu, head of an ancestral house
belonging to the Simeonites. 15 The name of
the Midianite woman who was killed was
Cozbi daughter of Zur, who was the head of a
clan, an ancestral house in Midian.

16 The LORD said to Moses, 17 "Harass the
Midianites, and defeat them; 18 for they have
harassed you by the trickery with which they
deceived you in the affair of Peor, and in the
affair of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of
Midian, their sister, she was killed on the day
of the plague that resulted from Peor."

A Census of the New Generation

26 After the plague the LORD said to
Moses and to Eleazar son of Aaron the
priest, 2 "Take a census of the whole congrega-
tion of the Israelites, from twenty years old
and upward, by their ancestral houses, every-
one in Israel able to go to war." 3 Moses and El-
eazar the priest spoke with them in the plains
of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho, say-
ing, 4 "Take [a] census of the people,[a] from
twenty years old and upward," as the LORD
commanded Moses.

The Israelites, who came out of the land of
Egypt, were:
5 Reuben, the firstborn of Israel. The de-
scendants of Reuben: of Hanoch, the clan of
the Hanochites; of Pallu, the clan of the Pal-
luites; 6 of Hezron, the clan of the Hezronites;
of Carmi, the clan of the Carmites. 7 These are
the clans of the Reubenites; the number of
those enrolled was forty-three thousand seven
hundred thirty. 8 And the descendants of Pallu:
Eliab. 9 The descendants of Eliab: Nemuel, Da-
than, and Abiram. These are the same Dathan
and Abiram, chosen from the congregation,
who rebelled against Moses and Aaron in the
company of Korah, when they rebelled against
the LORD, 10 and the earth opened its mouth
and swallowed them up along with Korah,
when that company died, when the fire de-
voured two hundred fifty men, and they be-
came a warning. 11 Notwithstanding, the sons
of Korah did not die.

12 The descendants of Simeon by their
clans: of Nemuel, the clan of the Nemuelites;
of Jamin, the clan of the Jaminites; of Jachin,
the clan of the Jachinites; 13 of Zerah, the clan
of the Zerahites; of Shaul, the clan of the
Shaulites.[b] 14 These are the clans of the Sime-
onites, twenty-two thousand two hundred.

15 The children of Gad by their clans: of
Zephon, the clan of the Zephonites; of Haggi,
the clan of the Haggites; of Shuni, the clan of

[a] Heb lacks *take a census of the people.* Compare verse 2
[b] Or *Saul.* [2] *Saulites*

carry out either form of punishment in vv. 4–5 and did nothing about the trespass in v. 6. **25.12** *My covenant of peace.* See Isa 54.10; Ezek 34.25; 37.26; Mal 2.4–5. **25.13** *Perpetual priesthood.* See also Ex 29.9; 40.15. **25.14–15** Both the Israelite man and the Midianite woman were important people in their own groups; see also v. 18 and *Zur* in 31.8. **25.16–18** See ch. 31. **25.18** This verse ties together the two stories in this chapter by pairing the Midianites with the Moabites in the *affair of Peor* and by asserting that the plague mentioned in vv. 8–9 was the result of the same Peor incident. *Trickery,* presumably the women's use of sexual contact to draw the Israelite men to sacrifices to a god other than the Lord; see 31.16.

26.1–65 The last obstacle to the conquest is overcome when the plague of ch. 25 apparently kills the remaining Israelites of the wilderness generation (see 26.64), those who were condemned to die because of the incident of the spies in chs. 13–14 (see 14.20–25, 28–35). At this point a new military census is taken, parallel to the census in ch. 1, and from this point the people of Israel are not the condemned generation of the forty years' wandering but rather a new generation that will live to conquer the promised land. **26.1** *After the plague* is v. 19 of ch. 25 in Hebrew. The plague is the one in 25.8–9, 18. *To Moses.* [1] *Aaron.* Cf. 1.3; 20.22–29. **26.2** Cf. 1.2–3. **26.4** *Who came out of the land of Egypt* is an odd introduction to the following list, since these are precisely not those people (vv. 64–65). The phrase may simply mean those who were on the way from Egypt to Canaan. **26.5–50** Cf. 1.20–43. The ordering of the tribes here is different from that in ch. 1; but similar to that in ch. 2, the eastern and southern threesomes have traded places, so that Reuben, the traditional firstborn, is first and Manasseh and Ephraim are switched within the western threesome (cf. Gen 41.50–52; 48.8–20). In this second military census in Numbers, furthermore, the clans of each tribe are listed along with the tribe's totals (cf. Gen 46.8–27). The totals in this list differ from the totals in ch. 1, clan by clan and for Israel as a whole. **26.9–10** *Dathan and Abiram.* See ch. 16. **26.11** On the Korahites, see note on

holy oil. 26 But if the slayer shall at any time go
outside the bounds of the original city of
refuge, 27 and is found by the avenger of blood
outside the bounds of the city of refuge, and is
killed by the avenger, no bloodguilt shall be in-
curred. 28 For the slayer must remain in the
city of refuge until the death of the high priest;
but after the death of the high priest the slayer
may return home.

29 These things shall be a statute and ordi-
nance for you throughout your generations
wherever you live.

30 If anyone kills another, the murderer
shall be put to death on the evidence of wit-
nesses; but no one shall be put to death on the
testimony of a single witness. 31 Moreover you
shall accept no ransom for the life of a mur-
derer who is subject to the death penalty; a
murderer must be put to death. 32 Nor shall
you accept ransom for one who has fled to a
city of refuge, enabling the fugitive to return to
live in the land before the death of the high
priest. 33 You shall not pollute the land in which
you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no ex-
piation can be made for the land, for the blood
that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one
who shed it. 34 You shall not defile the land in
which you live, in which I also dwell; for I the
LORD dwell among the Israelites.

Marriage of Female Heirs

36 The heads of the ancestral houses of
the clans of the descendants of Gilead
son of Machir son of Manasseh, of the
Josephite clans, came forward and spoke in
the presence of Moses and the leaders, the
heads of the ancestral houses of the Israelites;
2 they said, "The LORD commanded my lord to
give the land for inheritance by lot to the Isra-
elites; and my lord was commanded by the
LORD to give the inheritance of our brother
Zelophehad to his daughters. 3 But if they are
married into another Israelite tribe, then their
inheritance will be taken from the inheritance
of our ancestors and added to the inheritance
of the tribe into which they marry; so it will be
taken away from the allotted portion of our
inheritance. 4 And when the jubilee of the Isra-
elites comes, then their inheritance will be
added to the inheritance of the tribe into
which they have married; and their inherit-
tance will be taken from the inheritance of our
ancestral tribe."

5 Then Moses commanded the Israelites
according to the word of the LORD, saying,
"The descendants of the tribe of Joseph are
right in what they are saying. 6 This is what the
LORD commands concerning the daughters of
Zelophehad, 'Let them marry whom they
think best; only it must be into a clan of their
father's tribe that they are married, 7 so that no
inheritance of the Israelites shall be trans-
ferred from one tribe to another; for all Israel-
ites shall retain the inheritance of their ances-
tral tribes. 8 Every daughter who possesses an
inheritance in any tribe of the Israelites shall
marry one from the clan of her father's tribe,
so that all Israelites may continue to possess
their ancestral inheritance. 9 No inheritance
shall be transferred from one tribe to another;
for each of the tribes of the Israelites shall re-
tain its own inheritance.'"

10 The daughters of Zelophehad did as the
LORD had commanded Moses. 11 Mahlah, Tir-
zah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters
of Zelophehad, married sons of their father's
brothers. 12 They were married into the clans
of the descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph,
and their inheritance remained in the tribe of
their father's clan.

13 These are the commandments and the
ordinances that the LORD commanded through
Moses to the Israelites in the plains of Moab by
the Jordan at Jericho.

until the high priest's death atones for the victim's blood; see also Josh 20.6. If the killer steps outside the city of refuge, the pollution is released again and the avenger is justified in destroying the cause of pollution; cf. 2 Sam 19.18–23; 1 Kings 2.36–46. **35.33** *Pollutes the land.* See 35.25–28; Gen 4.10–11. **35.34** The land is holy because the Lord dwells there. See 5.1–4.

36.1–12 See 27.1–11. **36.1** See 27.1. **36.2** *Brother.* See 25.6; 27.4. **36.3** The complaint in this verse assumes that a wife's property became her husband's upon marriage. In such a case, the solution in 27.7–8 that daughters could inherit might mean that ancestral land would be moved from one tribe to another, a possibility not considered in framing that earlier solution and one to be avoided (see 27.1–11). **36.4** On the *jubilee of the Israelites,* see Lev 25.8–55; 27.16–25. Since the land was not sold, even the jubilee regulations would not bring it back to its original owners; cf. Lev 25.13–17, 28, 31, 33. **36.6–9** A regulation that women who inherit must marry within a specific family group (or else forfeit their property) is common among societies with patrilineal inheritance laws, including other ancient Near Eastern societies. **36.13** See 22.1; 26.3, 63; 33.48–50; 35.1; Deut 34.1, 8.

DEUTERONOMY

Name and Canonical Significance

DEUTERONOMY IS THE FIFTH BOOK of the Bible and the last of those traditionally ascribed to Moses comprising the canonical division Torah, or Pentateuch. The name, which reflects the Greek designation *deuteronomion* (meaning "second law–giving"), understands the book to be an account of Moses' work as legislator, supplementing and completing the revelation of covenantal law that began at Mount Horeb a generation before (see 1.3; 4.13–14; 5.22–6.3). A similar understanding of the book as an authoritative reprise and amplification of divine legislation is represented by the Hebrew name *Mishneh Torah.* In Jewish tradition the book is also and more generally known by its opening phrase, *'elleh haddevarim* ("These are the words"), frequently shortened to *devarim* ("[Book of] Words").

Deuteronomy is the only part of the Pentateuch to identify itself explicitly and repeatedly as a record of Mosaic *torah* (usually translated "law" in the NRSV): 1.5; 4.8, 44; 17.18–19; 27.3, 8, 26; 28.58, 61; 29.21; 30.10; 31.9, 11, 12, 24, 26; 32.46. *Torah* in these contexts may be characterized as the inspired, comprehensive "polity" (or "constitution") that Moses, unable himself to lead Israel across the Jordan, enacts for the people as a normative guide to their corporate existence in the national homeland they are about to occupy. In short, this authoritative *torah* is a virtual surrogate for Moses himself as the preeminent mediator of the divine word to Israel (see 5.4–5, 23–31; 34.10; cf. Num 12.6–8). From this perspective Deuteronomy is not merely a homiletical appendix to the pentateuchal narrative of Israel's prehistory and political formation under the leadership of Moses. Rather, as Moses' legacy par excellence Deuteronomy is the interpretative key to the Pentateuch understood as a whole to preserve the abiding revelation of God's will for the ongoing life of the covenant people.

In similar fashion Deuteronomy provides the crucial point of reference for an understanding of the canonical unity of the following collection of the Prophets (Hebrew *Nevi'im*) in Jewish scripture. Significantly, affirmations of the Mosaic *torah* in its characteristically Deuteronomic form bracket the collection as a whole (see Josh 1.7–8; Mal 3.22). Deuteronomic influence and perspectives are especially evident in the Former Prophets, consisting of the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings (see, e.g., Josh 1.1–9; 23–24; Judg 2.11–23; 1 Sam 7.3–14; 12.1–25; 2 Sam 7.1–29; 1 Kings 9.1–9; 11.1–13; 29–39; 14.1–16; 2 Kings

17.7–23; 21.1–23.27). For this reason these books are also known as the Deuteronomistic History in contemporary biblical scholarship. Many believe that Deuteronomy at one stage during its literary formation was an integral part of this national history, before it was detached and incorporated into the Pentateuch. In its dual character, both remembering Israel's past and preparing for its future, the book occupies a pivotal position, both literarily and theologically, in the canons of Jewish and Christian scriptures (see, e.g., "the law of Moses and the prophets," Acts 28.23).

Literary Character, Structure, and Principal Contents

DEUTERONOMY IS CAST in the form of a series of testamentary speeches and acts of Moses. Four editorial prefaces or superscriptions (1.1–5; 4.44–49; 29.1; 33.1) announce the coordinated segments of the work and describe the particular character and content of each major part. The first part (1.1–4.43) consists chiefly of Mosaic memoirs on Israel's prolonged journey from Horeb/Sinai to the plains of Moab in Transjordan (1.6–3.29), followed by a hortatory discourse on Israel's destiny as God's people (4.1–40) and a brief narrative appendix (4.41–43). The second and central part of the book (4.44–28.68) publishes the covenantal *torah*, introducing and systematically articulating the divinely authorized "polity" that Israel must implement in order to secure its collective political existence as the people of God. This central section has three major subdivisions: a review and exposition of the basic terms of the Horeb covenant (5.1–11.30); promulgation of the complementary statutory rulings (11.31–26.15); and a collection of rites of covenantal ratification and sanction (26.16–28.68). The third part of the book (29.1–32.52) describes another, supplementary covenant that the Lord charged Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab. This covenant stresses the social and multigenerational inclusiveness of Israel as well as responsibilities of its individual citizens. It includes reports of the commissioning of Joshua as Moses' successor and of the written consignment of the *torah*, and it ends with the recitation of Moses' eloquent "song" of witness to Israel's future generations. The fourth and final part of the book (33.1–34.12) contains Moses' testamentary blessings of the Israelite tribes and an account of his death and burial, with a concluding epitaph. Maintenance of the covenant relationship between Israel and its divine sovereign through the rule of faith and law within the community is thus the principal concern of Deuteronomy.

Sources and History of Composition

ALTHOUGH DEUTERONOMY EXHIBITS a remarkable coherence in comparison with the preceding books of the Pentateuch, it cannot be considered a unitary literary product. The internal evidence of the book indicates several stages of growth and editing. Among the sources used in composition are earlier pentateuchal narrative traditions, the Decalogue (which appears in a form different from that of Ex 20), legislation in the "Book of the Covenant" (Ex 20–23) together with the supplement in Ex 33–34, collections of blessings and curses, and the poems in chs. 32–33. Although some of the antecedent traditions may be older, the major stages in the compositional history of the book can with some confidence be dated to the two centuries between the fall of Samaria (721 BCE) and the beginning of the Judean restoration (ca. 535 BCE) after the exile to Babylonia. Since the early nineteenth century, critical scholarship has built a convincing case for relating at least the central portion of the book to the document recovered from the Jerusalem temple archives during the reign of King Josiah (621 BCE). Some of the

characteristic provisions of the polity bear a close correspondence to reforms attributed to that king (see 2 Kings 22–23), who seems to have renewed the efforts of King Hezekiah a century earlier (see 2 Kings 18.1–7; 2 Chr 29–31). Yet the received form of book points to an exilic setting—when the older Mosaic polity may have been set within an expanded frame of Moses' valedictory addresses to Israel. Authors must be sought among those who bore particular responsibility for the transmission, interpretation, and implementation of the Mosaic legacy of covenantal *torah*. Although reasonable arguments have been set forth on behalf of royal scribes, prophets, and tribal elders, most likely are those identified in the book itself as "levitical priests," whose functions included judicial decision making and instruction as well as officiating in worship (see esp. 7.8–13; 27.9–10; 31.9–13; 33.8–11). [S. DEAN MCBRIDE JR.]

Events at Horeb Recalled

1 These are the words that Moses spoke to
all Israel beyond the Jordan—in the wil-
derness, on the plain opposite Suph, between
Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-
zahab. 2(By the way of Mount Seir it takes
eleven days to reach Kadesh-barnea from
Horeb.) 3In the fortieth year, on the first day of
the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the Israel-
ites just as the LORD had commanded him to
speak to them. 4This was after he had defeated
King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned in
Heshbon, and King Og of Bashan, who
reigned in Ashtaroth and[a] in Edrei. 5Beyond
the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses under-
took to expound this law as follows:
6 The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb,
saying, "You have stayed long enough at this
mountain. 7Resume your journey, and go into
the hill country of the Amorites as well as into
the neighboring regions—the Arabah, the hill
country, the Shephelah, the Negeb, and the
seacoast—the land of the Canaanites and the
Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Eu-
phrates. 8See, I have set the land before you; go
in and take possession of the land that I[b] swore
to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to
Jacob, to give to them and to their descendants
after them."

Appointment of Tribal Leaders

9 At that time I said to you, "I am unable by
myself to bear you. 10The LORD your God has
multiplied you, so that today you are as nu-

a Gk Syr Vg Compare Josh 12.4: Heb lacks *and* *b* Sam Gk: MT *the LORD*

1.1–5 The preface understands Moses' opening address in 1.6–4.40 to be an expository foreword to *this law* (v. 5), which is the Deuteronomic *torah* directly introduced in 4.44. **1.1** *These are the words* and the abbreviation *Words* (Hebrew *devarim*) are often used as the book's title in Jewish tradition (see Introduction). *The plain opposite Suph* and following toponyms may define a natural amphitheater in the valley near Beth-peor; see 3.29. **1.2** Perhaps a comment on 1.19. *Mount Seir*, the Edomite highlands flanking the rift valley from the Dead Sea southward. Once thought to be the mountain refuge of Petra, *Kadesh-barnea* is now usually identified with the oases of 'Ain al-Qudeirat in northern Sinai. In Deuteronomy and some other sources (cf. Ex 3.1) *Horeb* is preferred over "Sinai" as the name for the wilderness mount of revelation. Cf. 33.2; Ex 19.1, 11. **1.3** The date, counting from the first Passover (Ex 12.2), when Moses completed his work as God's spokesman. **1.4** As prelude to the campaign west of the Jordan, these victories vindicate Israel's trust in divine providence; see 2.26–3.22; 4.46–48; cf. Ps 135.10–12.

1.6–3.29 Moses' memoirs review what happened to Israel and why during the post-Horeb epoch of his career. The chief lesson is that Israel's national well-being requires strict observance of all that God commands. **1.6–8** The order to depart from Horeb (see v. 2) was an oracular summons to invade and occupy the promised homeland west of the Jordan. Cf. Ex 33.1–3. **1.7** *The hill country of the Amorites* (also 1.19–20) and *the land of the Canaanites* (cf. Ex 13.11; Ezek 16.3), comprehensive terms for western Palestine, using general designations for the land's pre-Israelite occupants. Component regions are the *Arabah* (the Jordan rift valley), the central highland ridge, the western hills of the *Shephelah*, the *Negeb* slope of southern Judah, and the Mediterranean coastal plain. Territory to the northeast, called *the Lebanon* range, which extends into Syria toward the upper reach of the *Euphrates*, was controlled by Aramean states during most of the earlier Iron Age; Israel claimed hegemony over the region in the era of the Davidic-Solomonic empire (2 Sam 8.3–12; 1 Kings 4.21, 24) and briefly again in the heyday of Jeroboam II's reign (2 Kings 14.25). **1.8** Divine promise of *the land* to Israel's *ancestors*. See Gen 13.14–17; 15.12–21; 17.8; 26.4–5; 28.13–14. **1.9–18** Before setting out, a plan of military command and tribal judiciary was implemented to lighten Moses'

right and good in the sight of the LORD, so that
it may go well with you, and so that you may
go in and occupy the good land that the LORD
swore to your ancestors to give you, 19 thrust-
ing out all your enemies from before you, as
the LORD has promised.

20 When your children ask you in time to
come, "What is the meaning of the decrees
and the statutes and the ordinances that the
LORD our God has commanded you?" 21 then
you shall say to your children, "We were Phar-
aoh's slaves in Egypt, but the LORD brought us
out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 The LORD
displayed before our eyes great and awesome
signs and wonders against Egypt, against
Pharaoh and all his household. 23 He brought
us out from there in order to bring us in, to
give us the land that he promised on oath to
our ancestors. 24 Then the LORD commanded
us to observe all these statutes, to fear the
LORD our God, for our lasting good, so as to
keep us alive, as is now the case. 25 If we dili-
gently observe this entire commandment be-
fore the LORD our God, as he has commanded
us, we will be in the right."

A Chosen People

7 When the LORD your God brings you into
the land that you are about to enter and
occupy, and he clears away many nations be-
fore you—the Hittites, the Girgashites, the
Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the
Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations
mightier and more numerous than you—
2 and when the LORD your God gives them
over to you and you defeat them, then you
must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant
with them and show them no mercy. 3 Do not
intermarry with them, giving your daughters
to their sons or taking their daughters for your
sons, 4 for that would turn away your children
from following me, to serve other gods. Then
the anger of the LORD would be kindled
against you, and he would destroy you quickly.
5 But this is how you must deal with them:
break down their altars, smash their pillars,
hew down their sacred poles,[a] and burn their
idols with fire. 6 For you are a people holy to
the LORD your God; the LORD your God has
chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to
be his people, his treasured possession.

7 It was not because you were more numer-
ous than any other people that the LORD set
his heart on you and chose you—for you were
the fewest of all peoples. 8 It was because the
LORD loved you and kept the oath that he

a Heb *Asherim*

at *Massah*; see Ex 17.1–7; cf. 1.26–33; Num 14.22; Ps 95.8–9; Mt 4.7. **6.19** For the divine promise, see Ex 23.27; 34.11–12 (cf. Josh 2.22–24). **6.20–25** This catechesis illustrates observance of the instruction in 6.6–9, i.e., how a new generation should be led to acknowledge the Mosaic statutes and ordinances as central to God's gracious design for Israel's well-being (cf. Ex 12.26; 13.14–15; Josh 4.6–7, 21–22). **6.21–23** *We.* The response is succinct, confessional, and experiential; see also 26.5–10 (cf. 5.3; 6.4). **6.24–25** The chief aim of God's law is to secure life (cf. 4.1–4; 30.15–20). *Be in the right,* a verdict of acquittal, anticipated here because of meritorious discharge of covenantal obligations (cf. 24.13; Gen 15.6; Ezek 18.5–9).

7.1–26 In order to safeguard its allegiance to the Lord, Israel must extirpate the nations of Canaan along with their idolatrous cults (cf. 12.2–3; 20.16–18; Ex 23.23–33; 34.11–16; Num 33.51–56). **7.1–6** Prescription. **7.1** Like *Canaanites* and *Amorites* (see 1.7), *Hittites* may be a generic label for Israel's predecessors (cf. Gen 10.15; 23.3–20; 49.29–30; Num 13.29; Josh 1.4; Ezek 16.3, 45). Anatolian antecedents are possible for the *Girgashites* (cf. Gen 10.16), the *Perizzites* (cf. Gen 13.7; 34.30; Josh 17.15; Judg 1.4–5), and Jerusalem's *Jebusites* (cf. Josh 15.63; 2 Sam 5.6–8). *Hivites,* perhaps from north Syria, are associated with Shechem and the Gibeonite cities (cf. Gen 34.2; Josh 9.1–7; Judg 3.3; 2 Sam 21.2). *Seven nations* appear also in Josh 3.10; 24.11; such lists most often have six of the names (e.g., Ex 3.8; Josh 9.1; Judg 3.5; cf. Gen 15.19–21; 1 Kings 9.20). **7.2** *Utterly destroy.* The ban is a radical solution (cf. 20.16–18; Josh 10.40; 11.11–12) that, if enforced, would make the commands of vv. 2b–5 superfluous. *No covenant.* See Ex 23.32–33; 34.12, 15; Josh 9.3–27; 11.19; Judg 2.2–3. **7.3** Prohibition of intermarriage. See Ex 34.16; Josh 23.12–13; Judg 3.5–6 (cf. Gen 34.9–10; 1 Kings 11.1–6). **7.4** *Me,* apparently Moses, speaking as the Lord's surrogate; see 5.27 (cf. 11.13–15; 17.3; 28.20; 29.5). **7.5** Eradication of Canaanizing cult places and practices is a Deuteronomic priority (12.2–4; 29–31; 16.21–22; 18.9–14) which resonates with the measures attributed to kings Hezekiah and Josiah in 2 Kings 18.4; 23.4–24). *Pillars,* commemorative steles (cf. Gen 28.18; 35.14; Ex 24.4; Lev 26.1; 2 Kings 10.26–27). *Asherim* (see text note *a*) were probably cultic *poles* or trees, associated at least indirectly with the goddess Asherah (cf. Ex 34.13; Judg 6.25–30; 1 Kings 14.22–24; 2 Kings 17.16; Isa 27.9; Jer 17.2; Mic 5.14). **7.6** *Holy to the Lord* and *treasured possession* define the character of Israel's election. See 14.2, 21; 26.18–19; cf. Ex 19.5–6; Ps 135.4; Mal 3.17. **7.7–16** God's devotion to Israel is motivated solely by divine love and faithfulness and not by the nation's intrinsic value (variations on 5.6–10). **7.7** *Set his heart,* "was smitten with love" (10.14–15; cf. 21.11; Gen

swore to your ancestors, that the LORD has
brought you out with a mighty hand, and re-
deemed you from the house of slavery, from
the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know
therefore that the LORD your God is God, the
faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty
with those who love him and keep his com-
mandments, to a thousand generations, 10 and
who repays in their own person those who re-
ject him. He does not delay but repays in their
own person those who reject him. 11 There-
fore, observe diligently the commandment—
the statutes and the ordinances—that I am
commanding you today.

Blessings for Obedience

12 If you heed these ordinances, by diligently
observing them, the LORD your God will
maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he
swore to your ancestors; 13 he will love you,
bless you, and multiply you; he will bless the
fruit of your womb and the fruit of your
ground, your grain and your wine and your
oil, the increase of your cattle and the issue of
your flock, in the land that he swore to your
ancestors to give you. 14 You shall be the most
blessed of peoples, with neither sterility nor
barrenness among you or your livestock.
15 The LORD will turn away from you every ill-
ness; all the dread diseases of Egypt that you
experienced, he will not inflict on you, but he
will lay them on all who hate you. 16 You shall
devour all the peoples that the LORD your God
is giving over to you, showing them no pity;
you shall not serve their gods, for that would
be a snare to you.

17 If you say to yourself, "These nations are
more numerous than I; how can I dispossess
them?" 18 do not be afraid of them. Just re-
member what the LORD your God did to Phar-
aoh and to all Egypt, 19 the great trials that
your eyes saw, the signs and wonders, the
mighty hand and the outstretched arm by
which the LORD your God brought you out.
The LORD your God will do the same to all the
peoples of whom you are afraid. 20 Moreover,
the LORD your God will send the pestilence[a]
against them, until even the survivors and the
fugitives are destroyed. 21 Have no dread of
them, for the LORD your God, who is present
with you, is a great and awesome God. 22 The
LORD your God will clear away these nations
before you little by little; you will not be able
to make a quick end of them, otherwise the
wild animals would become too numerous for
you. 23 But the LORD your God will give them
over to you, and throw them into great panic,
until they are destroyed. 24 He will hand their
kings over to you and you shall blot out their
name from under heaven; no one will be able
to stand against you, until you have destroyed
them. 25 The images of their gods you shall
burn with fire. Do not covet the silver or the
gold that is on them and take it for yourself,
because you could be ensnared by it; for it is
abhorrent to the LORD your God. 26 Do not
bring an abhorrent thing into your house, or
you will be set apart for destruction like it. You
must utterly detest and abhor it; for it is set
apart for destruction.

a Or *hornets.* Meaning of Heb uncertain

34.8; Hos 11.1). **7.8** See 5.6. *Redeemed,* emancipated or ransomed (also 9.26; 13.5; 15.15; 21.8; 24.18; cf. Num 18.15–17; Ps 78.42; Hos 13.14). **7.9** Echoing 5.10 (cf. Neh 1.5; 9.32; Dan 9.4; Jon 4.2). *Faithful,* trustworthy, consistent, diligent (cf. 32.4; Pss 89.1–2; 98.3; Isa 49.7). *Covenant loyalty,* lit. "the covenant [Hebrew *berit*] and the steadfast love [Hebrew *chesed*]" (also v. 12). Cf. 1 Kings 8.23–24; Ps 89.24, 28, 33–34; Isa 54.10; 55.3; Mic 7.20). **7.10** An emphatic revision of 5.9b (cf. Ex 34.6–7; Num 14.18). Instead of corporate punishment, which might affect several generations, retribution for breach of covenant is now targeted against individual offenders (cf. 24.16; Jer 31.29–30; 32.18–19; Ezek 18.1–24). **7.13–14** Cf. 15.6; 28.4–14; Ex 23.25–26. *Grain, wine, oil,* the chief agricultural products of Canaan (11.14; 12.17; 14.23; 18.4; 28.51; cf. Hos 2.8, 22). **7.15** *Diseases of Egypt,* presumably exemplified by the plagues of Ex 9.3, 9 (cf. Deut 28.27, 60; Ex 15.26; Am 4.10). **7.16** *Snare to you.* See 12.29–32; cf. 7.25; Ex 23.32–33; 34.12–16; Judg 2.3. **7.17–26** Implementation (the conquest theme). **7.17–19** Divine warfare. Cf. 1.28–30; 3.22; 4.34; 37–38; 9.1–3; 20.1; 29.2–3; Josh 23.3; 9–10. **7.20** *Pestilence,* perhaps a metaphor for terror as a weapon of divine warfare (cf. 2.25; 32.23–24; Ex 15.14–16; 23.27–28; Josh 24.12; Hab 3.5). **7.22** *Little by little.* Cf. Ex 23.29–30; Judg 2.3, 20–23; 3.1–6. **7.23** *Panic.* Cf. 28.20; 1 Sam 5.9–11; 14.18–20. **7.24** See 11.25; 12.3; cf. Josh 13. **7.25–26** *Images . . . you shall burn.* See 9.21; 1 Kings 15.13; 2 Kings 10.26–27; 23.4, 11, 15. *Do not covet.* This and the following provisions foreshadow Josh 6.18–19 and the aftermath in Josh 7; cf. Judg 8.24–27; 17.2–4. *Abhorrent to the Lord* is a label used to proscribe things, practices, and persons deemed fraudulent, idolatrous, or otherwise morally repugnant (e.g., 12.31; 17.1; 18.12; 22.5; 23.18; 24.4; 25.16; Prov 3.32; 6.16; 15.8–9, 26; cf. Gen 43.32; Ex 8.26). *Destruction,* or "ban" (Hebrew *cherem*). See note on 2.33–35.

you shall eat there in the presence of the LORD
your God, you and your households together,
rejoicing in all the undertakings in which the
LORD your God has blessed you.
8 You shall not act as we are acting here
today, all of us according to our own desires,
9 for you have not yet come into the rest and
the possession that the LORD your God is giving you. 10 When you cross over the Jordan
and live in the land that the LORD your God is
allotting to you, and when he gives you rest
from your enemies all around so that you live
in safety, 11 then you shall bring everything
that I command you to the place that the LORD
your God will choose as a dwelling for his
name: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, and all
your choice votive gifts that you vow to the
LORD. 12 And you shall rejoice before the LORD
your God, you together with your sons and
your daughters, your male and female slaves,
and the Levites who reside in your towns
(since they have no allotment or inheritance
with you).

A Prescribed Place of Worship

13 Take care that you do not offer your burnt
offerings at any place you happen to see. 14 But
only at the place that the LORD will choose in
one of your tribes—there you shall offer your
burnt offerings and there you shall do everything I command you.
15 Yet whenever you desire you may
slaughter and eat meat within any of your
towns, according to the blessing that the LORD
your God has given you; the unclean and the
clean may eat of it, as they would of gazelle or
deer. 16 The blood, however, you must not eat;
you shall pour it out on the ground like water.
17 Nor may you eat within your towns the tithe
of your grain, your wine, and your oil, the
firstlings of your herds and your flocks, any of
your votive gifts that you vow, your freewill offerings, or your donations; 18 these you shall
eat in the presence of the LORD your God at
the place that the LORD your God will choose,
you together with your son and your daughter, your male and female slaves, and the Levites resident in your towns, rejoicing in the
presence of the LORD your God in all your undertakings. 19 Take care that you do not neglect
the Levite as long as you live in your land.
20 When the LORD your God enlarges your
territory, as he has promised you, and you say,
"I am going to eat some meat," because you
wish to eat meat, you may eat meat whenever
you have the desire. 21 If the place where the
LORD your God will choose to put his name is
too far from you, and you slaughter as I have
commanded you any of your herd or flock
that the LORD has given you, then you may eat
within your towns whenever you desire. 22 Indeed, just as gazelle or deer is eaten, so you
may eat it; the unclean and the clean alike may
eat it. 23 Only be sure that you do not eat the
blood; for the blood is the life, and you shall
not eat the life with the meat. 24 Do not eat it;
you shall pour it out on the ground like water.

15.18–21; 30.2–15; Am 4.4–5). **12.7** Emphasis on inclusive religious celebrations is characteristic of the Deuteronomic polity (cf. 12.12, 18–19; 14.26–27; 15.20; 16.11, 14; 26.11). **12.8–12** A temporal distinction is made between divergent practices *today* and the unification of worship that will become normative for settled Israel. **12.8** *We are acting . . . all of us according to our own desires,* lit. "each person (doing) what is right in his own sight": individual willfulness reigns (cf. Judg 17.6; 21.25) rather than divine authority (*what is right and good in the sight of the LORD*; cf. 6.18; 12.25, 28). **12.9–10** *Rest and . . . possession,* secure territorial dominion (see notes on 3.18–20; 11.24; cf. 33.28–29). According to developed Deuteronomic tradition, the conditions were only met with the creation of David's empire (cf. Josh 23.1–5; 2 Sam 7.1–16; 1 Kings 5.3–5; 8.56). **12.11** *As a dwelling for his name,* better "to establish his name"; see note on 12.5. **12.12** *Levites.* See notes on 10.8–9; 18.1–8. **12.13–19** Two key functional distinctions are made here, one between extant cultic "places" (cf. Ex 20.24; 1 Sam 7.16; Josh 22.10–34), which are not or no longer to be used for sacrificial worship, and the chosen *place,* and the other between animals sacrificed at the altar and animals slaughtered for food. **12.15** *Whenever you desire,* as your appetite dictates (cf. 18.6; Prov 23.2) and the Lord's *blessing* permits (cf. 7.13). *The unclean and the clean may eat of it.* Since domestic slaughter of livestock is no different from the killing of game (*gazelle or deer*) for edible meat, rules of purity that pertain to the consumption of sacrificial offerings and other sacral dues are not applicable (cf. also 12.20–22; 15.22; Lev 7.19–21; 17.3–9). **12.16** *Blood* is the essence of animal "life" and must not be consumed (cf. 12.23; 15.23; Gen 9.4–5; Lev 17.10–14; 19.26; 1 Sam 14.31–35). **12.20–28** A summary paragraph emphasizes orthopraxy and its motives, though nonsacrificial slaughter is permitted as a geographical necessity (*When the LORD . . . enlarges your territory;* cf. 14.24; 19.8–9; Ex 34.24), sacrificial slaughter remains preferable whenever the altar of the single sanctuary is near enough for use (vv. 20–22, 27; cf. Lev 17.3–9). **12.23** The restriction on eating *blood* must never be relaxed (vv. 23–25; cf. 12.16; Lev 17.10–14); requisite offerings and sacral dues must be

25 Do not eat it, so that all may go well with you
and your children after you, because you do
what is right in the sight of the LORD. 26 But
the sacred donations that are due from you,
and your votive gifts, you shall bring to the
place that the LORD will choose. 27 You shall
present your burnt offerings, both the meat
and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your
God; the blood of your other sacrifices shall be
poured out beside[a] the altar of the LORD your
God, but the meat you may eat.
28 Be careful to obey all these words that I
command you today,[b] so that it may go well
with you and with your children after you forever, because you will be doing what is good
and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

Warning against Idolatry

29 When the LORD your God has cut off be-
fore you the nations whom you are about to
enter to dispossess them, when you have dispossessed them and live in their land, 30 take
care that you are not snared into imitating
them, after they have been destroyed before
you: do not inquire concerning their gods,
saying, "How did these nations worship their
gods? I also want to do the same." 31 You must
not do the same for the LORD your God, be-
cause every abhorrent thing that the LORD
hates they have done for their gods. They
would even burn their sons and their daugh-
ters in the fire to their gods. 32[c] You must dili-
gently observe everything that I command
you; do not add to it or take anything from it.

13 [d] If prophets or those who divine by
dreams appear among you and promise you omens or portents, 2 and the omens or
the portents declared by them take place, and
they say, "Let us follow other gods" (whom
you have not known) "and let us serve them,"
3 you must not heed the words of those proph-
ets or those who divine by dreams; for the
LORD your God is testing you, to know
whether you indeed love the LORD your God
with all your heart and soul. 4 The LORD your
God you shall follow, him alone you shall fear,
his commandments you shall keep, his voice
you shall obey, him you shall serve, and to him
you shall hold fast. 5 But those prophets or
those who divine by dreams shall be put to
death for having spoken treason against the
LORD your God—who brought you out of the
land of Egypt and redeemed you from the
house of slavery—to turn you from the way in
which the LORD your God commanded you to
walk. So you shall purge the evil from your
midst.
6 If anyone secretly entices you—even if it
is your brother, your father's son or your
mother's son, or your own son or daughter, or
the wife you embrace, or your most intimate
friend—saying, "Let us go worship other
gods," whom neither you nor your ancestors
have known, 7 any of the gods of the peoples
that are around you, whether near you or far

a Or on b Gk Sam Syr: MT lacks today c Ch 13.1 in Heb
d Ch 13.2 in Heb e Sam Gk Compare Tg: MT lacks your father's son or

presented regularly at the sanctuary (vv. 26–27; cf. 14.22–27; 15.19–20; 16.16–17; 26.1–15). **12.28** A concluding exhortation composed of familiar phrases (e.g., 4.40; 5.29; 6.3, 17–18; 12.25).

12.29–17.13 This division treats corporate obligations and institutional structures designed to maintain Israel's national identity as the covenant people of God. **12.29–32** Specific provisions are introduced by another warning against any compromise of Israel's distinctiveness as defined by the Mosaic legislation (cf. 4.1–2; 5.32–6.3; 11.31–12.1). **12.30** *Snared,* here through attraction to aboriginal religious culture rather than by political or nuptial alliance with the condemned nations (cf. 7.1–5, 25; Ex 23.33; 34.12; Judg 2.3). **12.31** *Abhorrent.* See note on 7.25–26. Immolation of children by *fire* is particularly associated with the cult of Molech, practiced during the monarchical era in the Hinnom Valley, southwest of Jerusalem (Lev 18.21; 20.2–5; 2 Kings 23.10; Jer 7.31; 19.5; cf. also 18.10; 2 Kings 3.27; 16.3; 21.6). **12.32** *Everything:* neither less nor more, because worship of the Lord augmented with pagan practices becomes paganism (cf. 2 Kings 17.7–41).

13.1–18 Three cases are summarized to prescribe severe retribution against instigators of sedition. **13.1–5** Mantic incitement to apostasy is a criminal offense, never credible even when supported by accurate prognostication. **13.1–3** *Divine by dreams.* See, e.g., Gen 37.5–10; Num 12.6; Judg 7.13–14; Jer 23.25; 27.9; Joel 2.28. *Omens or portents,* any forecasts or signs offered to authenticate claims of divine empowerment (see 34.11; Ex 4.1–9, 21; 7.9; Judg 6.17–21, 36–40). *Testing.* See 8.2, 16. **13.4** An emphatic restatement of allegiance to the Lord alone (cf. 6.13; 10.20; 11.22). **13.5** *Spoken treason* also describes prophetic duplicity in Jer 28.16; 29.32. *So . . . midst.* The formula emphasizes communal responsibility to eradicate perpetrators of virulent evil from Israel's midst (also 17.7, 12; 19.19; 21.21; 22.21, 22, 24; 24.7). **13.6–11** Clandestine enticement to apostasy must be confronted with equal resolve and harsh punishment. **13.6–8** Loyalty to Israel's divine sovereign takes precedence over even the closest human bonds of kinship, marriage, and collegiality. **13.6** *Intimate friend,* one as beloved as one's

away from you, from one end of the earth to
the other, 8you must not yield to or heed any
such persons. Show them no pity or compas-
sion and do not shield them. 9But you shall
surely kill them; your own hand shall be first
against them to execute them, and afterwards
the hand of all the people. 10Stone them to
death for trying to turn you away from the
LORD your God, who brought you out of the
land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.
11Then all Israel shall hear and be afraid, and
never again do any such wickedness.

12 If you hear it said about one of the towns
that the LORD your God is giving you to live in,
13that scoundrels from among you have gone
out and led the inhabitants of the town astray,
saying, "Let us go and worship other gods,"
whom you have not known, 14then you shall
inquire and make a thorough investigation. If
the charge is established that such an abhor-
rent thing has been done among you, 15you
shall put the inhabitants of that town to the
sword, utterly destroying it and everything in
it—even putting its livestock to the sword.
16All of its spoil you shall gather into its public
square; then burn the town and all its spoil
with fire, as a whole burnt offering to the
LORD your God. It shall remain a perpetual
ruin, never to be rebuilt. 17Do not let anything
devoted to destruction stick to your hand, so
that the LORD may turn from his fierce anger
and show you compassion, and in his compas-
sion multiply you, as he swore to your ance-
tors, 18if you obey the voice of the LORD your
God by keeping all his commandments that I
am commanding you today, doing what is
right in the sight of the LORD your God.

Pagan Practices Forbidden

14 You are children of the LORD your God.
You must not lacerate yourselves or
shave your forelocks for the dead. 2For you are
a people holy to the LORD your God; it is you
the LORD has chosen out of all the peoples on
earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

Clean and Unclean Foods

3 You shall not eat any abhorrent thing.
4These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the
sheep, the goat, 5the deer, the gazelle, the roe-
buck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, and
the mountain-sheep. 6Any animal that divides
the hoof and has the hoof cleft in two, and
chews the cud, among the animals, you may
eat. 7Yet of those that chew the cud or have the
hoof cleft you shall not eat these: the camel,
the hare, and the rock badger, because they
chew the cud but do not divide the hoof; they
are unclean for you. 8And the pig, because it
divides the hoof but does not chew the cud, is
unclean for you. You shall not eat their meat
and you shall not touch their carcasses.

own self (cf. 1 Sam 18.3). **13.8** *No pity.* Cf. 7.16; 19.13, 21; 25.12. **13.9–10** To *kill* offenders by stoning on presumption of guilt legitimates communal lynching (cf. 1 Sam 30.6; 1 Kings 12.18). But the Septuagint may preserve the preferable reading, that an accuser must first "decry" or "publicly charge" a culprit, thereby initiating judicial proceedings that may result in capital punishment carried out by accuser and communal court (cf. 17.4–7; 21.18–21; 22.20–24; Josh 7.10–26; 1 Kings 21.8–14). **13.11** Publicized execution in such circumstances is meant as a deterrent (cf. 17.12–13; 21.21). **13.12–18** This case outlines judicial procedure and martial retribution in the event that an entire town in Israel becomes contaminated by apostasy. **13.13** *Scoundrels,* lit. "sons without worth," "outlaws" who defy legitimate authority (cf. Judg 19.22; 20.13; 1 Sam 2.12). **13.14** *Inquire* could connote oracular consultation (cf. Judg 20.18, 23; Josh 7.13–21) but the clear purport of this Deuteronomic usage is judicial initiative to gather empirical evidence (see 17.4, 9; 19.18; cf. Josh 22.10–34). **13.15–17** The apostate town becomes anathema, like the former nations whose practices it assimilated (12.29–30); thus a comprehensive ban must be implemented against it, lest Israel as a whole incur the wrath of God (20.16–18; cf. 7.25–26).

13.16 *Whole burnt offering,* a sacrificial conflagration (33.10; Lev 6.22–23; 1 Sam 7.9; cf. Isa 34.6–7). *Perpetual ruin,* like Ai (Josh 8.28; cf. Jer 49.2).

14.1–21 Select rules pertaining to Israel's comportment as the Lord's holy people. **14.1** *Children of the LORD* is language elsewhere attested especially in prophetic contexts treating Israel's filial waywardness (32.5–6, 19–20; Ps 103.13; Isa 1.2, 4; 30.1; Jer 3.14, 19, 22; cf. Jer 31.9, 20; Hos 1.10; 11.1–4). *Lacerate, shave . . . forelocks.* Self-laceration and tonsure are perhaps prohibited because they were associated with pagan rites (cf. Lev 19.27–28; 21.5; 1 Kings 18.28; Jer 16.6–7; 41.4–5; 47.5; Am 8.10). **14.2** A restatement of covenantal integrity or "holiness" based on Ex 19.5–6 (cf. 7.6) introduces a series of dietary rules. **14.3** *Abhorrent* in the general prohibition makes foods excluded from Israel's diet a matter of the Lord's discretion (see note on 7.25–26; cf. Ex 8.26). **14.4–20** The basic categories of land animals (vv. 4–8), fish (vv. 9–10), and flying creatures (vv. 11–20) reflect the familiar taxonomy of the created order (Gen 1.20–25; 9.2–3). A common antecedent tradition as well as some mutual influence at a late stage of textual formation best account for the detailed similarities and differences between this classification and its counterparts in

9 Of all that live in water you may eat these:
whatever has fins and scales you may eat.
10And whatever does not have fins and scales
you shall not eat; it is unclean for you.

11 You may eat any clean birds. 12But these
are the ones that you shall not eat: the eagle,
the vulture, the osprey, 13the buzzard, the kite
of any kind; 14every raven of any kind; 15the
ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk
of any kind; 16the little owl and the great owl,
the water hen 17and the desert owl,[a] the car-
rion vulture and the cormorant, 18the stork,
the heron of any kind; the hoopoe and the
bat.[b] 19And all winged insects are unclean for
you; they shall not be eaten. 20You may eat any
clean winged creature.

21 You shall not eat anything that dies of it-
self; you may give it to aliens residing in your
towns for them to eat, or you may sell it to a
foreigner. For you are a people holy to the
LORD your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

Regulations concerning Tithes

22 Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed
that is brought in yearly from the field. 23In
the presence of the LORD your God, in the
place that he will choose as a dwelling for his
name, you shall eat the tithe of your grain,
your wine, and your oil, as well as the firstlings
of your herd and flock, so that you may learn
to fear the LORD your God always. 24But if,
when the LORD your God has blessed you, the
distance is so great that you are unable to
transport it, because the place where the LORD
your God will choose to set his name is too far
away from you, 25then you may turn it into
money. With the money secure in hand, go to
the place that the LORD your God will choose;
26spend the money for whatever you wish—
oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink, or whatever
you desire. And you shall eat there in the pres-
ence of the LORD your God; you and your
household rejoicing together. 27As for the Le-
vites resident in your towns, do not neglect
them, because they have no allotment or in-
heritance with you.

28 Every third year you shall bring out the
full tithe of your produce for that year, and
store it within your towns; 29the Levites, be-
cause they have no allotment or inheritance
with you, as well as the resident aliens, the or-
phans, and the widows in your towns, may
come and eat their fill so that the LORD your
God may bless you in all the work that you un-
dertake.

Laws concerning the Sabbatical Year

15 Every seventh year you shall grant a re-
mission of debts. 2And this is the man-
ner of the remission: every creditor shall remit
the claim that is held against a neighbor, not ex-
acting it of a neighbor who is a member of the

[a] Or *pelican* [b] Identification of several of the birds in verses 12–18 is uncertain

Lev 11.2–23. Some of the species identifications, especially of the birds, remain uncertain. **14.21** *Anything that dies of itself,* i.e., carrion or the carcass of an otherwise edible animal from which the blood was not drained (cf. 12.16, 22–27; with Ex 22.31; Lev 17.15; 22.8; Ezek 44.31). The issue is ritual purity, not health per se; hence the affected meat could be eaten by those who did not belong to the sacral community (resident *aliens* or a *foreigner*). The old prohibition against cooking *a kid in its mother's milk* (Ex 23.19; 34.26) concludes the series of rules. The original significance of this prohibition is a matter of some dispute. Some see it as proscribing Canaanite religious practices, others as being directed against the unnatural and callous treatment of animals. The later Jewish dietary practice of not mixing meat and dairy products is based on this law.

14.22–29 The *tithe* probably originated as a 10 percent tax on agricultural produce (*all the yield of your seed*), usually paid in kind to the land's sovereign or to designated government officials (cf. Gen 14.20; 28.22; Lev 27.30–33; Num 18.21–32; 1 Sam 8.15, 17; Am 4.4). Here the ancient practice is roughly adapted to the circumstances of unification of worship. **14.23** *As a dwelling for his name.* See notes on 12.5; 12.11. The three annual pilgrimage festivals (see 16.16–17) are presumably meant as primary occasions for presentation of both agricultural tithes and *firstlings* of livestock (see also 12.17; 15.19–23). **14.24–27** Emphasis again falls on promoting inclusive celebrations (cf. note on 12.7); important social, economic, and administrative implications are ignored (cf. 2 Chr 31.2–19; Neh 12.44; Mk 11.15; Jn 2.13–14). **14.28–29** Provision, however, is added for local storage and distribution of tithes from produce harvested *every third year,* to sustain dispersed levitical clans as well as to provide for others in need of charity (cf. 26.12–15; Ex 22.21–24).

15.1–18 This remarkable revision of older laws (Ex 21.2–11; 22.25; 23.10–11) seeks to strengthen procedures for redressing economic imbalances within Israelite society resulting from usury and debt slavery. (For such abusive practices, see Neh 5.1–13; Job 24.9; Ezek 18.16–18; Am 2.6–8.) **15.1–3** Sabbatical *remission of debts* (Hebrew *shemitta,* only in 15.1, 2, 9; 31.10) regularizes proclamation on the Lord's behalf

the false witness had meant to do to the other.
So you shall purge the evil from your midst.
20 The rest shall hear and be afraid, and a crime
such as this shall never again be committed
among you. 21 Show no pity: life for life, eye for
eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for
foot.

Rules of Warfare

20 When you go out to war against your
enemies, and see horses and chariots,
an army larger than your own, you shall not
be afraid of them; for the LORD your God is
with you, who brought you up from the land
of Egypt. 2 Before you engage in battle, the
priest shall come forward and speak to the
troops, 3 and shall say to them: "Hear, O Israel!
Today you are drawing near to do battle
against your enemies. Do not lose heart, or be
afraid, or panic, or be in dread of them; 4 for it
is the LORD your God who goes with you, to
fight for you against your enemies, to give you
victory." 5 Then the officials shall address the
troops, saying, "Has anyone built a new house
but not dedicated it? He should go back to his
house, or he might die in the battle and another
dedicate it. 6 Has anyone planted a vineyard
but not yet enjoyed its fruit? He should
go back to his house, or he might die in the
battle and another be first to enjoy its fruit.
7 Has anyone become engaged to a woman but
not yet married her? He should go back to
his house, or he might die in the battle and
another marry her." 8 The officials shall continue
to address the troops, saying, "Is anyone
afraid or disheartened? He should go back to
his house, or he might cause the heart of his
comrades to melt like his own." 9 When the officials
have finished addressing the troops,
then the commanders shall take charge of
them.
10 When you draw near to a town to fight
against it, offer it terms of peace. 11 If it accepts
your terms of peace and surrenders to you,
then all the people in it shall serve you at
forced labor. 12 If it does not submit to you
peacefully, but makes war against you, then
you shall besiege it; 13 and when the LORD your
God gives it into your hand, you shall put all
its males to the sword. 14 You may, however,
take as your booty the women, the children,
livestock, and everything else in the town, all
its spoil. You may enjoy the spoil of your enemies,
which the LORD your God has given you.
15 Thus you shall treat all the towns that are
very far from you, which are not towns of the
nations here. 16 But as for the towns of these
peoples that the LORD your God is giving you
as an inheritance, you must not let anything
that breathes remain alive. 17 You shall annihilate
them—the Hittites and the Amorites, the
Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and
the Jebusites—just as the LORD your God has
commanded, 18 so that they may not teach you
to do all the abhorrent things that they do for
their gods, and you thus sin against the LORD
your God.
19 If you besiege a town for a long time,
making war against it in order to take it, you
must not destroy its trees by wielding an ax

fective deterrence (cf. 13.11) commend punishment corresponding to the harm that the culprit intended to do to the victim. The talion formula *life for life* . . . *foot for foot* (cf. Ex 21.23–25) is invoked to underscore the principle of reciprocity.

20.1–20 Protocols of holy war, sketched in this and subsequent units (21.10–14; 23.9–14; 24.5), are one of the features distinguishing the Deuteronomic polity from other bodies of biblical law. The martial program of the later Judean monarchy (cf. 2 Kings 18.7–19.35; 23.29) as well as the ideology of the conquest era (e.g., 7.1–2, 17–26; 9.1–3; 31.3–8) seems to be reflected in these texts. **20.1** Because the Lord is present as warrior with Israel to give victory (cf. 1.30; 3.22; Ex 14.14; 15.1–4; Judg 4.14), the militia should not be intimidated by a foe's superior numbers and weaponry. *Horses and chariots.* See Josh 11.4; 1 Kings 20.25; Isa 31.1. **20.2–9** The levy. **20.2–4** The only stated task of the *priest* is to deliver a vestigial war oracle (cf. 1.20–21, 29–31; 9.1–3); cf., e.g., Num 31.6; Judg 20.25–28; 1 Sam 7.7–11; 14.36–42. **20.5–8** On the administrative role of the *officials,* see 16.18 (cf. 1.15; Josh 1.10). Implementation of these provisions for exemption is specifically noted in 1 Macc 3.56 (cf. Deut 24.5; Judg 7.3). *Dedicated,* or "inaugurated"; cf. 1 Kings 8.63 (of the temple); also Deut 28.30 (*live in*). **20.6** *Enjoyed its fruit,* made "profane" or ordinary use of the harvest (Jer 31.5; cf. Lev 19.23–25). **20.7** *Engaged,* formally betrothed; cf. 2 Sam 3.14. **20.9** *Commanders,* lit. "officers of hosts" (cf. 1.15; 1 Kings 2.5). **20.10–20** Rules of engagement. **20.10–11** *Terms of peace,* surrender followed by vassalage (cf. 2.26; Josh 9.3–27; 11.19; Judg 1.27–35; 21.13; 2 Sam 10.19). **20.12–15** A mitigated ban is applicable against distant or external foes (cf. 2.33–35; 3.6–7; Num 31.7–54). **20.16–18** A total ban must be inflicted upon the proscribed nations of Canaan (see 7.1–2; cf. 12.29–31). *Anything that breathes,* livestock as well as the human populations (cf. Gen 7.22; Josh 10.40; 11.11; 14; 1 Kings 15.29). **20.19–20** For the tactics called into question, see 2 Kings 3.19, 25; cf. Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.523; 6.5–6.

against them. Although you may take food
from them, you must not cut them down. Are
trees in the field human beings that they
should come under siege from you? 20 You
may destroy only the trees that you know do
not produce food; you may cut them down for
use in building siegeworks against the town
that makes war with you, until it falls.

Law concerning Murder by Persons Unknown

21 If, in the land that the LORD your God is
giving you to possess, a body is found
lying in open country, and it is not known who
struck the person down, 2 then your elders and
your judges shall come out to measure the distances
to the towns that are near the body.
3 The elders of the town nearest the body shall
take a heifer that has never been worked, one
that has not pulled in the yoke; 4 the elders of
that town shall bring the heifer down to a wadi
with running water, which is neither plowed
nor sown, and shall break the heifer's neck
there in the wadi. 5 Then the priests, the sons of
Levi, shall come forward, for the LORD your
God has chosen them to minister to him and to
pronounce blessings in the name of the LORD,
and by their decision all cases of dispute and
assault shall be settled. 6 All the elders of that
town nearest the body shall wash their hands
over the heifer whose neck was broken in the
wadi, 7 and they shall declare: "Our hands did
not shed this blood, nor were we witnesses to
it. 8 Absolve, O LORD, your people Israel, whom
you redeemed; do not let the guilt of innocent
blood remain in the midst of your people Israel." Then they will be absolved of bloodguilt.
9 So you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood
from your midst, because you must do what is
right in the sight of the LORD.

Female Captives

10 When you go out to war against your enemies,
and the LORD your God hands them
over to you and you take them captive, 11 suppose
you see among the captives a beautiful
woman whom you desire and want to marry,
12 and so you bring her home to your house:
she shall shave her head, pare her nails, 13 discard
her captive's garb, and shall remain in
your house a full month, mourning for her father
and mother; after that you may go in to
her and be her husband, and she shall be your
wife. 14 But if you are not satisfied with her,
you shall let her go free and not sell her for
money. You must not treat her as a slave, since
you have dishonored her.

The Right of the Firstborn

15 If a man has two wives, one of them loved
and the other disliked, and if both the loved
and the disliked have borne him sons, the
firstborn being the son of the one who is disliked,
16 then on the day when he wills his possessions
to his sons, he is not permitted to
treat the son of the loved as the firstborn in
preference to the son of the disliked, who is
the firstborn. 17 He must acknowledge as firstborn
the son of the one who is disliked, giving
him a double portion[a] of all that he has; since

a Heb *two-thirds*

21.1–9 This case sketches procedures for restricting communal liability and exculpating bloodguilt in event of a rural homicide in which the culprit cannot be found and prosecuted (cf. 19.4–13; Num 35.30–34). **21.2** Appointed *judges* (see 16.18) exercise concurrent jurisdiction with local *elders* (see note on 19.12) in determining the town nearest the scene of the crime. **21.3–4** Transfer or expurgation of liability is enacted by nonsacrificial slaughter (*break the neck;* cf. Ex 13.13; 34.20) of an unworked *heifer* (cf. Num 19.2; 1 Sam 6.7) in a pristine locale. *Running water.* The "constant flow" (cf. Ps 74.15; Am 5.24) presumably effects the removal of bloodguilt. **21.5** For the jurisdiction of *the priests, the sons of Levi* (also 31.9; cf. 18.1), see 17.8–13. **21.6–8** An exculpatory act (hand washing) and declaration of innocence accompany petitionary prayer for removal of bloodguilt. **21.8** *Absolve,* "cleanse," "forgive," or "expiate" (e.g., 32.43; Ex 32.30; 2 Sam 21.3). **21.9** Cf. 13.5, 18; 19.13.

21.10–21 These three articles (vv. 10–14, 15–17, 18–21) impose restraints on the exercise of authority by male heads of household. **21.10–14** Here a foreign woman acquired as a spoil of war (cf. 20.14) who then becomes a man's slave wife or concubine may not later be sold for profit by the husband (cf. Ex 21.7–11). **21.12–13.** The rites mark a transition separating the woman from her former identity and captive status in preparation for her role as bride. **21.14** *Go free* may denote manumission rather than divorce (cf. 15.12–13; Jer 34.16; cf. 22.19, 29; 24.1–3). *As a slave,* i.e., as chattel. *Dishonored,* or "violated," often refers to coerced sexual intercourse (e.g., 22.24, 29; Gen 34.2; Judg 19.24; 2 Sam 13.12). **21.15–17** The legal status of the *firstborn* son, with an attendant share of inheritance, is fixed by priority of birth rather than paternal decision. See, e.g., Gen 21.9–13; 27.1–40; 48.13–49.4; 1 Kings 1.15–21; 1 Chr 5.1–2; cf. Code of Hammurabi 165–170. **21.15** *Disliked.* Cf. Gen 29.31–33. **21.17** *Double portion,* "two-thirds" of

JOSHUA

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA tells the story of the Israelites who, under Joshua's guidance and with the benefit of divine intervention, crossed the Jordan River to take control of the land of Canaan. Israel takes its orders from Joshua, who gets his orders directly from the Lord. The land was God's gift, promised to the ancestors in the stories of Gen 12–50 and secured by conquest under God's military leadership. In generations to come, Israel's possession of its land would often be endangered by outside attack or foreign domination, but the book of Joshua sustained its claim on the land given to it by God.

Structure

THE BOOK SHOWS FOUR MAIN DIVISIONS: preparations for the attack (chs. 1–5), conquest of the land (chs. 6–12), apportionment of the land to the tribes by lot (chs. 13–21), and two national assemblies called by Joshua (chs. 23–24). There are three decisive demonstrations of divine power: at Jericho (ch. 6), at Ai (chs. 7–8), and at Gibeon (chs. 9–10). Each of these three stories embodies the idea of a miraculous sign and victory won by the Lord in the role of Divine Warrior. The tradition of sacral war confesses, "The LORD fought for Israel" (10.14, 42; cf. 23.3, 10). The geography of conquest falls into three campaigns, central (chs. 6–8), southern (ch. 10), and northern (ch. 11), with a summary in ch. 12. The apportionment of land begins in the south with Judah (chs. 14–15) and then turns to the central territories of Ephraim and Manasseh (chs. 16–17). The remaining tribes west of the Jordan receive their land based on the work of a survey commission (chs. 18–19).

Content and Message

AT THE OUTSET ISRAEL IS DEPICTED as a mighty twelve-tribe army. The people are encamped east of the Jordan River near the northern end of the Dead Sea. The Lord encourages Joshua as their leader (1.1–2, 5–9) and promises Israel a sweeping land (1.3–4). This is the land toward which Moses had led the people in their wanderings for forty years since their departure from Mount Sinai/Horeb. In the concluding chapter, Joshua assembles all the tribes of Israel at the city of Shechem in the heart of the land of promise. There Joshua presides at a covenant ceremony in which rival gods are repudiated and Israel affirms its allegiance to the Lord alone.

Preparations for entrance into the land (ch. 1) are followed by a reconnaissance of Jericho

(ch. 2), crossing the Jordan River and setting up memorial stones at Gilgal (chs. 3–4), and finally circumcision of all the males (5.2–9) because circumcision had not been practiced during the wilderness wanderings. With a celebration of the first Passover west of the Jordan (5.10–12), all was at last in readiness for the warfare, as signaled by Joshua's encounter with a mysterious heavenly commander (5.13–15). Stories of warfare (6.1–11.15) stress that the conquest was the result of the Lord's gracious action, for which Israel could claim no credit. Israel's proper role was loyalty and obedience (8.30–35). Sweeping claims are made for military conquest of "all" the land (11.16, 23) and its complete distribution to the tribes (13.8–19.51). This optimistic viewpoint, however, stands in sharp tension with contrary statements that describe the conquest as less than total (13.1–7; 15.63; 16.10; 17.12–13; 23.5–13).

Concluding chapters continue to advocate for loyalty and obedience. To facilitate justice in cases of homicide, while at the same time curbing the practice of blood vengeance, asylum towns ("cities of refuge") are designated, three on each side of the Jordan (ch. 20). These and other towns are designated in each of the tribes to provide residential and grazing rights for the priestly tribe of Levi (ch. 21). Deep rifts in national unity are vividly displayed when the building of an altar "near the Jordan" (ch. 22) nearly results in intertribal warfare. Joshua's concluding address spirals downward to a stern warning (ch. 23), followed by a great covenanting ceremony at Shechem (ch. 24). The stage is set for the story of Israel's life in the land from start (Judges) to finish (2 Kings).

Canonical Context, Sources, and Redaction

JOSHUA INCORPORATES THREE TYPES of material. Conquest narratives describing the victories of the Lord, who fights for Israel as the Divine Warrior, make up much of chs. 2–11. Geographical lists and descriptions are found in chs. 12–21. Theological discourses introduce the book in ch. 1 and conclude it in chs. 23–24. All three types of material work together to claim the land of promise for Israel. The individual narratives in Joshua began as folktales about merely local victories, but were eventually gathered into a connected narrative as the triumphs of a unified Israel (chs. 2–11). Later this collection was reedited, growing to chs. 1–12, 23, as part of a historical work that also included the books of Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. Because the book of Deuteronomy served as its preface and theological foundation, scholars refer to this larger work as the Deuteronomistic History. The main edition of this history probably originated in the reign of the reforming king Josiah, triggered by the discovery of an early form of Deuteronomy during repairs at the Jerusalem temple (ca. 622 BCE; see 2 Kings 22–23). After the defeat of Judah, the geographical material of chs. 13–21 and the story of ch. 22 were added, and ch. 24 was appended to form a second conclusion.

The stories and other materials taken up in Joshua cannot be used directly as historical evidence for a violent conquest. The stories were told and the lists preserved to serve theological and nationalistic interests, not historical purposes. Archaeological data frequently provide illustrative light, but rarely decisive corroboration. However, when studied with the aid of social-science perspectives, the texts and excavation data combine to yield a clearer picture of the emergence of Israel in the premonarchical period. [ROBERT G. BOLING, revised by RICHARD D. NELSON]

God's Commission to Joshua

1 After the death of Moses the servant of
the LORD, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of
Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, 2"My servant
Moses is dead: Now proceed to cross the Jor-
dan, you and all this people, into the land that
I am giving to them, to the Israelites. 3Every
place that the sole of your foot will tread upon
I have given to you, as I promised to Moses.
4From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far
as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the
land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the
west shall be your territory. 5No one shall be
able to stand against you all the days of your
life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you;
I will not fail you or forsake you. 6Be strong
and courageous; for you shall put this people
in possession of the land that I swore to their
ancestors to give them. 7Only be strong and
very courageous, being careful to act in accor-
dance with all the law that my servant Moses
commanded you; do not turn from it to the
right hand or to the left, so that you may be
successful wherever you go. 8This book of the
law shall not depart out of your mouth; you
shall meditate on it day and night, so that you
may be careful to act in accordance with all
that is written in it. For then you shall make
your way prosperous, and then you shall be
successful. 9I hereby command you: Be strong
and courageous; do not be frightened or dis-
mayed, for the LORD your God is with you
wherever you go."

Preparations for the Invasion

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the
people, 11"Pass through the camp, and com-
mand the people: 'Prepare your provisions; for
in three days you are to cross over the Jordan,
to go in to take possession of the land that the
LORD your God gives you to possess.'"

12 To the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the
half-tribe of Manasseh Joshua said, 13"Re-
member the word that Moses the servant of
the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD
your God is providing you a place of rest, and
will give you this land.' 14Your wives, your little
ones, and your livestock shall remain in the
land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan.
But all the warriors among you shall cross
over armed before your kindred and shall help
them, 15until the LORD gives rest to your kin-
dred as well as to you, and they too take pos-
session of the land that the LORD your God is
giving them. Then you shall return to your
own land and take possession of it, the land
that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you
beyond the Jordan to the east."

16 They answered Joshua: "All that you
have commanded us we will do, and wherever
you send us we will go. 17Just as we obeyed
Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only
may the LORD your God be with you, as he was
with Moses! 18Whoever rebels against your
orders and disobeys your words, whatever you
command, shall be put to death. Only be
strong and courageous."

1.1–11 God commissions Joshua. Vv. 1–9 emphasize qualities required of Joshua and the leadership he must provide in taking over the land. **1.1** Action begins *after the death of Moses,* who had been denied entrance into the land (Num 20.12; Deut 34.4). **1.3** Walking over land was a way of legally claiming it. **1.4** Canaan lay west of the Jordan, stretching from the Negeb *wilderness* in the south through the mountains of *Lebanon.* The description of the land of promise extending as far north as the *Euphrates* reflects the promise of Gen 15.18; Deut 11.24 as well as royal ideology (Ps 72.8). These expansive, ideal borders were never actually achieved. **1.5** The Lord, speaking as the Divine Warrior who leads heavenly armies into battle and fights for Israel, promises Joshua military success (see v. 3) and effective presence (see v. 9). **1.6** *Strong and courageous* (repeated in vv. 7, 9, 18). Cf. Deut 31.7, 23. The rhetoric of speeches in Joshua frequently echoes Deuteronomy. **1.7–8** This is the theology of Deuteronomy. Obedience to *the law . . . Moses commanded* leads to prosperity and success. Joshua is to resemble the ideal king described in Deut 17.18–20. In the context of the Deuteronomistic History (see Introduction), *this book of the law* (cf. 2 Kings 22.8) refers to some form of Deuteronomy. **1.11** These *three days* are concluded by 3.2.

1.12–18 Involvement of tribes in Transjordan. In territory east of the Jordan, settled by Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh, the followers of Moses achieved their first successes. These tribes had already occupied their land, but were now commanded to take part in the seizure of Canaan, where the other half of Manasseh will settle. Deut 3.18–20 reports their agreement with Moses. **1.13** *Rest* (also v. 15) is security in the land established by the Lord's defeat of the enemy (21.44; 23.1). **1.16–18** The eastern tribes here respond eagerly and echo Joshua's own words from vv. 7, 9. A double use of *only* (vv. 17–18) introduces some tension into the plot, however. Readers may wonder whether the Lord will be *with* Joshua, and whether Joshua will prove to be *strong and courageous.* Cooperative eagerness will turn to suspicion in ch. 22 in a dispute over an altar near the Jordan.

Spies Sent to Jericho

2 Then Joshua son of Nun sent two men se-
cretly from Shittim as spies, saying, "Go,
view the land, especially Jericho." So they
went, and entered the house of a prostitute
whose name was Rahab, and spent the night
there. 2The king of Jericho was told, "Some Is-
raelites have come here tonight to search out
the land." 3Then the king of Jericho sent or-
ders to Rahab, "Bring out the men who have
come to you, who entered your house; for they
have come only to search out the whole land."
4But the woman took the two men and hid
them. Then she said, "True, the men came to
me, but I did not know where they came from.
5And when it was time to close the gate at
dark, the men went out. Where the men went I
do not know. Pursue them quickly, for you can
overtake them." 6She had, however, brought
them up to the roof and hidden them with the
stalks of flax that she had laid out on the roof.
7So the men pursued them on the way to the
Jordan as far as the fords. As soon as the pur-
suers had gone out, the gate was shut.

8 Before they went to sleep, she came up to
them on the roof 9and said to the men: "I
know that the LORD has given you the land,
and that dread of you has fallen on us, and
that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear
before you. 10For we have heard how the LORD
dried up the water of the Red Sea[a] before you
when you came out of Egypt, and what you
did to the two kings of the Amorites that were
beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom
you utterly destroyed. 11As soon as we heard
it, our hearts melted, and there was no
courage left in any of us because of you. The
LORD your God is indeed God in heaven above
and on earth below. 12Now then, since I have
dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the
LORD that you in turn will deal kindly with my
family. Give me a sign of good faith 13that you
will spare my father and mother, my brothers
and sisters, and all who belong to them, and
deliver our lives from death." 14The men said
to her, "Our life for yours! If you do not tell
this business of ours, then we will deal kindly
and faithfully with you when the LORD gives
us the land."

15 Then she let them down by a rope
through the window, for her house was on the
outer side of the city wall and she resided
within the wall itself. 16She said to them, "Go
toward the hill country, so that the pursuers
may not come upon you. Hide yourselves

a Or *Sea of Reeds*

2.1–24 Rahab outsmarts the spies. Jericho controlled several fords and routes of access into the hill country. Archaeology has shown that by the late thirteenth and early twelfth centuries BCE Jericho had been reduced to at most a small, unfortified village sitting atop the ruins of the previously walled city. **2.1** *Shittim,* the final desert encampment (Num 25.1), lay in the eastern Jordan Valley. Similar stories about *spies* are found in Num 13; Josh 7.2–5; Judg 18.2–10. *Rahab* is a legally independent woman with her own *house.* The nature of her business means that the presence of strangers would not be questioned. Rahab would later be reckoned among the ancestors of Jesus (Mt 1.5), lauded as an example of living faith (Heb 11.31), and justified by her works (Jas 2.25). **2.3–4** *Come to you* and *came to me* have a double meaning. Understood as "come into you/me," the phrase can imply sexual intercourse as well as arrival at Rahab's house. **2.6–7** Rahab is not just a harlot. She is processing *flax* by spreading it out on her flat roof to dry. Although Rahab has saved them from the king, the spies find themselves trapped in a rather public location on her *roof* (cf. 2 Sam 16.22) and the city *gate was shut. Pursuers* block their route back, further deepening their predicament. This puts Rahab in a position to negotiate a favorable agreement. **2.9–11** Rahab provides the content of the spies' eventual report (v. 24). She confesses the Lord as universal God using language that echoes Deut 4.37–38. The kingdoms of *Sihon and Og* (v. 10), east of the Jordan, had been conquered under Moses' leadership (Num 21; Deut 1–2). They had been *utterly destroyed,* i.e., devoted to destruction in a sacral war in which the Lord fought for Israel in the role of Divine Warrior (cf. 6.17, 21). Rahab seeks to avoid this fate for her family. **2.12–14** Rahab proposes a covenant of reciprocal protection to protect her extended family. She has *dealt kindly* (using covenant language, "shown *chesed*") with the spies by showing faithfulness to the relationship between host and guest. They are to *deal kindly* in return by honoring a covenant to protect her family. *Our life for yours* indicates that the spies assent to this arrangement. Their agreement violates the prohibition of Deut 20.10–20. **2.15** The location of Rahab's house described here does not fit well with the collapse of Jericho's wall in ch. 6, given that she gathers her family into her house to save them (2.18; 6.22–23). That *she resided within the wall* suggests defensive fortifications of the casemate type, i.e., parallel walls divided by cross walls creating chambers that might be used for storage or residence. **2.16** *Toward the hill country.* Rahab remains in charge of the situation. Having sent the searchers eastward toward the Jordan (v. 7), she directs the spies westward into the hills to hide for a few

there three days, until the pursuers have returned; then afterward you may go your way."
17 The men said to her, "We will be released
from this oath that you have made us swear to
you 18 if we invade the land and you do not tie
this crimson cord in the window through
which you let us down, and you do not gather
into your house your father and mother, your
brothers, and all your family. 19 If any of you
go out of the doors of your house into the
street, they shall be responsible for their own
death, and we shall be innocent; but if a hand
is laid upon any who are with you in the
house, we shall bear the responsibility for their
death. 20 But if you tell this business of ours,
then we shall be released from this oath that
you made us swear to you." 21 She said, "Ac-
cording to your words, so be it." She sent them
away and they departed. Then she tied the
crimson cord in the window.

22 They departed and went into the hill
country and stayed there three days, until the
pursuers returned. The pursuers had searched
all along the way and found nothing. 23 Then
the two men came down again from the hill
country. They crossed over, came to Joshua
son of Nun, and told him all that had hap-
pened to them. 24 They said to Joshua, "Truly
the LORD has given all the land into our hands;
moreover all the inhabitants of the land melt
in fear before us."

Israel Crosses the Jordan

3 Early in the morning Joshua rose and set
out from Shittim with all the Israelites,
and they came to the Jordan. They camped
there before crossing over. 2 At the end of three
days the officers went through the camp 3 and
commanded the people, "When you see the
ark of the covenant of the LORD your God
being carried by the levitical priests, then you
shall set out from your place. Follow it, 4 so
that you may know the way you should go, for
you have not passed this way before. Yet there
shall be a space between you and it, a distance
of about two thousand cubits; do not come
any nearer to it." 5 Then Joshua said to the peo-
ple, "Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the
LORD will do wonders among you." 6 To the
priests Joshua said, "Take up the ark of the
covenant, and pass on in front of the people."
So they took up the ark of the covenant and
went in front of the people.

7 The LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will
begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so
that they may know that I will be with you as I
was with Moses. 8 You are the one who shall
command the priests who bear the ark of the
covenant, 'When you come to the edge of the
waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the
Jordan.'" 9 Joshua then said to the Israelites,
"Draw near and hear the words of the LORD
your God." 10 Joshua said, "By this you shall
know that among you is the living God who
without fail will drive out from before you the
Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girga-
shites, Amorites, and Jebusites: 11 the ark of the
covenant of the Lord of all the earth is going to
pass before you into the Jordan. 12 So now se-
lect twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one
from each tribe. 13 When the soles of the feet of
the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the
Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the
Jordan, the waters of the Jordan flowing from
above shall be cut off; they shall stand in a sin-
gle heap."

14 When the people set out from their tents
to cross over the Jordan, the priests bearing
the ark of the covenant were in front of the
people. 15 Now the Jordan overflows all its

days. These *three days* (cf. v. 22) represent a timetable different from the three days of 1.11; 3.2. **2.17–20** Once they are safely out of Rahab's control, the spies seek to clarify their covenant obligations. They insist that she display a conspicuous identification sign, assemble her family at a single location, and keep their secret. **2.24** The spies' report does not go beyond what Rahab has told them (vv. 9, 11). Rahab's story abruptly resumes after the capture of Jericho (6.22–25).

3.1–17 Crossing the Jordan. Israelites in a later time would be exhorted to "remember . . . what happened from Shittim to Gilgal" (Mic 6.5). **3.1** *Early in the morning* signals eager readiness in beginning a commanded task (cf. 6.12; 7.16; 8.10). **3.2** These are the *three days* referred to in 1.11. **3.3** The *levitical priests* are responsible for the transport of the *ark of the covenant*, which embodies the Lord's presence in sacral warfare. The crossing is described in terms suggestive of a religious procession. **3.4** *Two thousand cubits*, roughly 3,000 feet (1,000 meters). The people must stay at a distance because the ark is dangerously holy (cf. 2 Sam 6.6–7). **3.5** *Sanctify yourselves*. To prepare for a miraculous event, the people are to make themselves holy by means of a ritual. **3.7** Any concern raised in 1.17 is resolved, for the Lord is undeniably *with* Joshua (cf. 6.27). **3.10** Formulaic lists of Canaan's inhabitants also occur in 9.1; 11.3; 12.8; 24.11 and are characteristic of Deuteronomy. **3.15** The detail that the Jordan *overflows all its banks* makes it possible for the priests' feet to touch *the edge of the water*. It also

banks throughout the time of harvest. So
when those who bore the ark had come to the
Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the
ark were dipped in the edge of the water, 16 the
waters flowing from above stood still, rising
up in a single heap far off at Adam, the city
that is beside Zarethan, while those flowing
toward the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea,[a]
were wholly cut off. Then the people crossed
over opposite Jericho. 17 While all Israel were
crossing over on dry ground, the priests who
bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood
on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan,
until the entire nation finished crossing over
the Jordan.

Twelve Stones Set Up at Gilgal

4 When the entire nation had finished
crossing over the Jordan, the LORD said to
Joshua: 2 "Select twelve men from the people,
one from each tribe, 3 and command them,
'Take twelve stones from here out of the mid-
dle of the Jordan, from the place where the
priests' feet stood, carry them over with you,
and lay them down in the place where you
camp tonight.'" 4 Then Joshua summoned the
twelve men from the Israelites, whom he had
appointed, one from each tribe. 5 Joshua said
to them, "Pass on before the ark of the LORD
your God into the middle of the Jordan, and
each of you take up a stone on his shoulder,
one for each of the tribes of the Israelites, 6 so
that this may be a sign among you. When your
children ask in time to come, 'What do those
stones mean to you?' 7 then you shall tell them
that the waters of the Jordan were cut off in
front of the ark of the covenant of the LORD.
When it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of
the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall
be to the Israelites a memorial forever."

8 The Israelites did as Joshua commanded.
They took up twelve stones out of the middle
of the Jordan, according to the number of the
tribes of the Israelites, as the LORD told Joshua;
carried them over with them to the place
where they camped, and laid them down there.
9 (Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of
the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the
priests bearing the ark of the covenant had
stood; and they are there to this day.)

10 The priests who bore the ark remained
standing in the middle of the Jordan, until
everything was finished that the LORD com-
manded Joshua to tell the people, according to
all that Moses had commanded Joshua. The
people crossed over in haste. 11 As soon as all
the people had finished crossing over, the ark
of the LORD, and the priests, crossed over in
front of the people. 12 The Reubenites, the
Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh
crossed over armed before the Israelites, as
Moses had ordered them. 13 About forty thou-
sand armed for war crossed over before the
LORD to the plains of Jericho for battle.

14 On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in
the sight of all Israel; and they stood in awe of
him, as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the
days of his life.

15 The LORD said to Joshua, 16 "Command
the priests who bear the ark of the covenant,[b]
to come up out of the Jordan." 17 Joshua there-
fore commanded the priests, "Come up out of
the Jordan." 18 When the priests bearing the
ark of the covenant of the LORD came up from

a Heb *Salt Sea* b Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

makes the miracle more impressive. **3.16** The water that would have flowed downstream was *cut off* because it *stood still* sixteen miles (twenty-six kilometers) upstream at *Adam* (Tell-ed-Damiyeh).

4.1–5.1 Israel at Gilgal. These verses appear to describe two sets of twelve stones. One set is installed midstream (v. 9). Another set is erected on shore (vv. 3, 5, 8, 20) and would become a memorial to the crossing; this is the shrine at *Gilgal* (v. 19), which means "Circle." Gilgal was a major political and religious center in the premonarchical period. There Saul was made king (1 Sam 11.15), and David's relations with Judah were later repaired (2 Sam 19.15, 40). Gilgal flourished as a sanctuary in the eighth century BCE, when it was roundly denounced by prophets (Hos 4.15; 9.15; 12.11; Am 4.4; 5.5). **4.1** A comparison of this verse with 3.17; 4.11 shows that readers are to understand that the actions of vv. 2–10 took place while the crossing was still under way. **4.3** The stones will be temporarily placed in the camp, then set up permanently at Gilgal (v. 20). **4.6–7** The stones will teach future generations about the crossing (cf. Deut 6.20–25). Repetition highlights the marvel that the water was *cut off*. In contrast, vv. 22–24 emphasize that Israel crossed on dry ground. **4.9** *To this day* is a formula that signals an etiology, a story that explains the origin of a name, place, circumstance, or custom known to readers. Cf. v. 5.9; 6.25; 7.26; 8.28–29; 9.27; 10.27; 13.13; 14.14; 15.63; 16.10. **4.11** The narrative sets aside the topic of the stones and picks up the description of the crossing from v. 1. **4.12–13** The presence of the eastern tribes emphasizes that all Israel engaged in the conquest as a cooperative venture. *As Moses had ordered*. See Deut 3.18–20. **4.14** This fulfills the Lord's

the middle of the Jordan, and the soles of the
priests' feet touched dry ground, the waters of
the Jordan returned to their place and over-
flowed all its banks, as before.

19 The people came up out of the Jordan on
the tenth day of the first month, and they
camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.
20 Those twelve stones, which they had taken
out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal,
21 saying to the Israelites, "When your children
ask their parents in time to come, 'What do
these stones mean?' 22 then you shall let your
children know, 'Israel crossed over the Jordan
here on dry ground.' 23 For the LORD your God
dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until
you crossed over, as the LORD your God did to
the Red Sea,[a] which he dried up for us until we
crossed over, 24 so that all the peoples of the
earth may know that the hand of the LORD is
mighty, and so that you may fear the LORD
your God forever."

The New Generation Circumcised

5 When all the kings of the Amorites beyond
the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of
the Canaanites by the sea, heard that the LORD
had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the
Israelites until they had crossed over, their
hearts melted, and there was no longer any
spirit in them, because of the Israelites.

2 At that time the LORD said to Joshua,
"Make flint knives and circumcise the Israel-
ites a second time." 3 So Joshua made flint
knives, and circumcised the Israelites at Gibe-
ath-haaraloth.[b] 4 This is the reason why Joshua
circumcised them: all the males of the people
who came out of Egypt, all the warriors, had
died during the journey through the wilder-
ness after they had come out of Egypt. 5 Al-
though all the people who came out had been
circumcised, yet all the people born on the
journey through the wilderness after they had
come out of Egypt had not been circumcised.
6 For the Israelites traveled forty years in the
wilderness, until all the nation, the warriors
who came out of Egypt, perished, not having
listened to the voice of the LORD. To them the
LORD swore that he would not let them see the
land that he had sworn to their ancestors to
give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.
7 So it was their children, whom he raised up in
their place, that Joshua circumcised; for they
were uncircumcised, because they had not
been circumcised on the way.

8 When the circumcising of all the nation
was done, they remained in their places in the
camp until they were healed. 9 The LORD said
to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away from you
the disgrace of Egypt." And so that place is
called Gilgal[c] to this day.

The Passover at Gilgal

10 While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal
they kept the passover in the evening on the
fourteenth day of the month in the plains of
Jericho. 11 On the day after the passover, on
that very day, they ate the produce of the land,
unleavened cakes and parched grain. 12 The
manna ceased on the day they ate the produce
of the land, and the Israelites no longer had
manna; they ate the crops of the land of Ca-
naan that year.

Joshua's Vision

13 Once when Joshua was by Jericho, he
looked up and saw a man standing before him

a Or *Sea of Reeds* b That is *the Hill of the Foreskins* c Related to Heb *gālal* to roll

promise made in 3.7. **4.18** These incidents undo each event described in 3.15–16. **4.19** *The first month,* Abib, i.e., March-April, later called Nisan. This note points forward to the date of Passover (5.10). **4.22–23** This response focuses on similarities to the Red Sea crossing on dry ground (in contrast to vv. 6–7). **4.24** The Jordan crossing has two ongoing purposes: that *all the peoples of the earth* will acknowledge the power (*hand*) of the Lord, and that Israel's descendants (the *children* of vv. 21–22) will hold the Lord in reverent awe (*fear*). **5.1** Neighboring *kings* react in fear, confirming Rahab's observations (2.9–11). Their loss of courage will motivate their strategy (9.1–2; 10.1–5; 11.1–5) and make it possible for Israel to win the victories described in chs. 6–11.

5.2–12 Circumcision and Passover. All males participating in the Passover must be circumcised (Ex 12.48); but the practice had not been followed during the wilderness period. **5.2** *A second time.* The men previously circumcised had died in the wilderness, so circumcision had to be repeated for the post-exodus generation. **5.3** This narrative explains a place-name near Gilgal, *Gibeath-haaraloth,* "Foreskin Hill." **5.9** *The disgrace of Egypt* signifies Israel's low status as Egyptian slaves and perhaps insults directed at them by their captors. **5.11** *Unleavened cakes and parched grain* are appropriate foods for the first day after the celebration of the Passover because they could be prepared quickly. **5.12** *Manna* is replaced by *the crops of the land of Canaan,* signifying that Israel has moved from wilderness scarcity to agricultural productive land. **5.13–15** The commander of the Lord's celestial army.

with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went
to him and said to him, "Are you one of us, or
one of our adversaries?" 14 He replied, "Nei-
ther; but as commander of the army of the
LORD I have now come." And Joshua fell on his
face to the earth and worshiped, and he said to
him, "What do you command your servant,
my lord?" 15 The commander of the army of
the LORD said to Joshua, "Remove the sandals
from your feet, for the place where you stand
is holy." And Joshua did so.

Jericho Taken and Destroyed

6 Now Jericho was shut up inside and out
because of the Israelites; no one came out
and no one went in. 2 The LORD said to Joshua,
"See, I have handed Jericho over to you, along
with its king and soldiers. 3 You shall march
around the city, all the warriors circling the
city once. Thus you shall do for six days, 4 with
seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams'
horns before the ark. On the seventh day you
shall march around the city seven times, the
priests blowing the trumpets. 5 When they
make a long blast with the ram's horn, as soon
as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all
the people shall shout with a great shout; and
the wall of the city will fall down flat, and all
the people shall charge straight ahead." 6 So
Joshua son of Nun summoned the priests and
said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant,
and have seven priests carry seven trumpets of
rams' horns in front of the ark of the LORD."
7 To the people he said, "Go forward and
march around the city; have the armed men
pass on before the ark of the LORD."

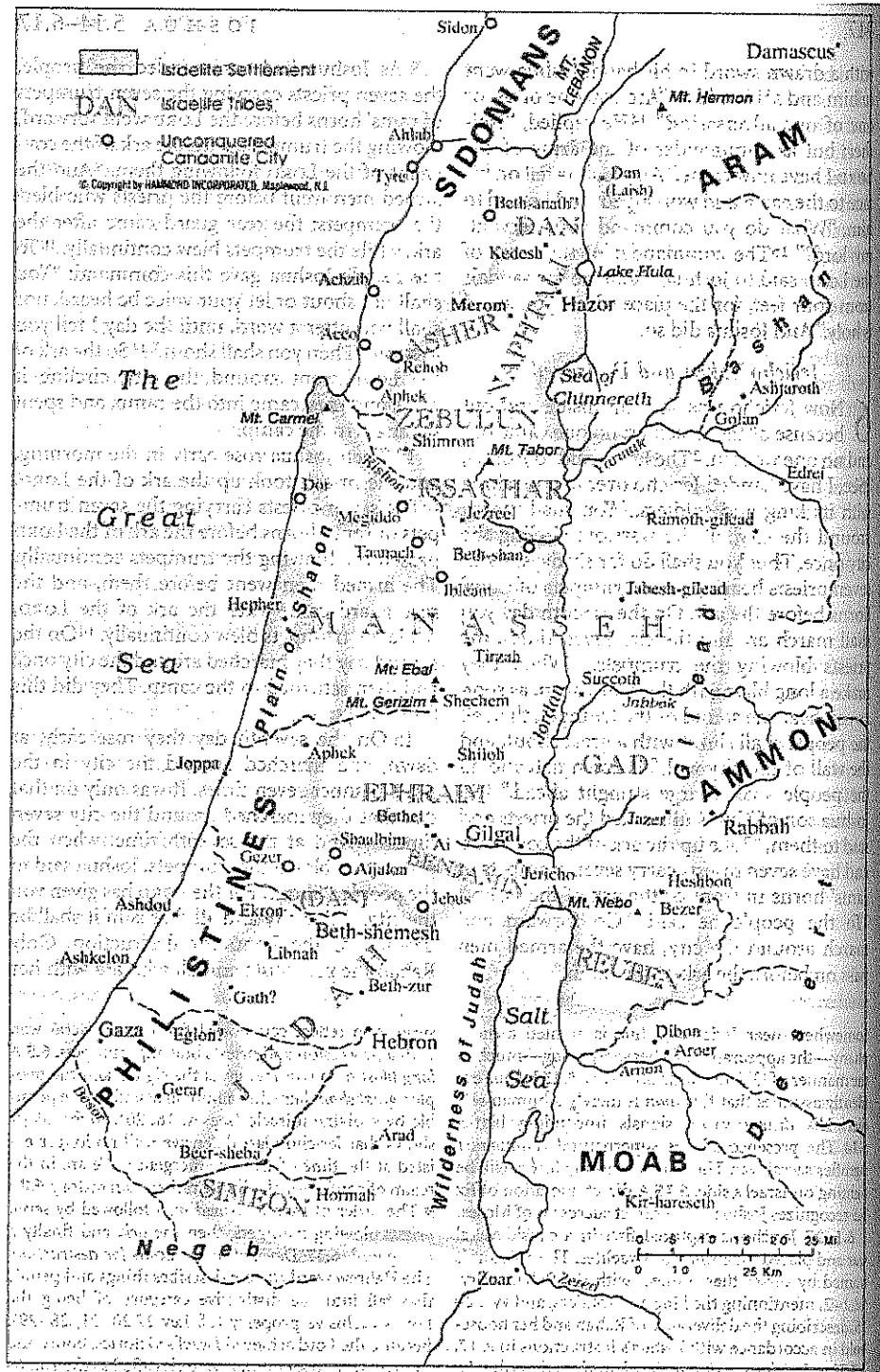
8 As Joshua had commanded the people,
the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets
of rams' horns before the LORD went forward,
blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the cov-
enant of the LORD following them. 9 And the
armed men went before the priests who blew
the trumpets; the rear guard came after the
ark, while the trumpets blew continually. 10 To
the people Joshua gave this command: "You
shall not shout or let your voice be heard, nor
shall you utter a word, until the day I tell you
to shout. Then you shall shout." 11 So the ark of
the LORD went around the city, circling it
once; and they came into the camp, and spent
the night in the camp.

12 Then Joshua rose early in the morning,
and the priests took up the ark of the LORD.
13 The seven priests carrying the seven trum-
pets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD
passed on, blowing the trumpets continually.
The armed men went before them, and the
rear guard came after the ark of the LORD,
while the trumpets blew continually. 14 On the
second day they marched around the city once
and then returned to the camp. They did this
for six days.

15 On the seventh day they rose early, at
dawn, and marched around the city in the
same manner seven times. It was only on that
day that they marched around the city seven
times. 16 And at the seventh time, when the
priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to
the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you
the city. 17 The city and all that is in it shall be
devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only
Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her

Somewhere near Jericho, Joshua is granted a theophany—the appearance of a heavenly being—much in the manner of Gideon (Judg 6.11–12). **5.13** Joshua evidently assumes that this *man* is merely a human soldier. His *drawn sword* signals impending battle. **5.14** The presence of this supernatural *commander* signifies sacral war. The Lord's heavenly forces will be fighting on Israel's side. **5.15** A direct quotation of Ex 3.5 recognizes Joshua as the direct successor of Moses.

6.1–27 Jericho is captured first in a classic sacral war and placed off-limits for Israelites. The account is framed by verses that connect with the Rahab story: vv. 1–2, mentioning the king and soldiers, and vv. 22–25, describing the deliverance of Rahab and her household in accordance with Joshua's instructions in v. 17. **6.1** That *Jericho was shut up inside and out* describes Israel's dilemma. Jericho's wall was an impregnable defense. **6.2** A divine promise of victory was a central element of sacral-war tradition (cf. 8.1; 10.8). **6.3–4** The siege is to reflect ceremonial features of sacral war, with a procession and priests blowing trumpets. **6.5** A *long blast* on a trumpet gives the signal, and the people's *great shout* launches a human assault made possible by a divine miracle (see vv. 16, 20). Archaeology shows that Jericho's last defensive *wall* no longer existed at the time of Israel's emergence. We are in the realm of confessional folklore rather than history. **6.8–9** The order of march: *armed men* followed by *seven priests* blowing trumpets, then the *ark,* and finally a *rear guard.* **6.17** *Devoted to the LORD for destruction.* The Hebrew word *cherem* describes things and people that fall into the distinctive category of being the Lord's exclusive property (cf. Lev 27.20–21, 28–29). Because the Lord achieved Israel's victories, booty and captives won in sacral war were classified as *cherem.* As the Lord's irrevocable possession, such *cherem* had to be kept from human use; because they would be valuable as slaves, the entire enemy population was to be



The conquest of Canaan according to the narratives in Joshua. Other sources and archaeological evidence show different patterns of early Israelite settlement.

in her house shall live because she hid the mes-
sengers we sent.[18] As for you, keep away from
the things devoted to destruction, so as not to
covet[a] and take any of the devoted things and
make the camp of Israel an object for destruc-
tion, bringing trouble upon it. [19] But all silver
and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are
sacred to the LORD; they shall go into the trea-
sury of the LORD." [20] So the people shouted,
and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the
people heard the sound of the trumpets, they
raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat;
so the people charged straight ahead into the
city and captured it. [21] Then they devoted to
destruction by the edge of the sword all in the
city, both men and women, young and old,
oxen, sheep, and donkeys.

22 Joshua said to the two men who had
spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's
house, and bring the woman out of it and all
who belong to her, as you swore to her." [23] So
the young men who had been spies went in
and brought Rahab out, along with her father,
her mother, her brothers, and all who be-
longed to her—they brought all her kindred
out—and set them outside the camp of Israel.
[24] They burned down the city, and everything
in it; only the silver and gold, and the vessels of
bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of
the house of the LORD. [25] But Rahab the prosti-
tute, with her family and all who belonged to
her, Joshua spared. Her family[b] has lived in Is-
rael ever since. For she hid the messengers
whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

26 Joshua then pronounced this oath, say-
ing,

"Cursed before the LORD be anyone who
tries
to build this city—this Jericho!
At the cost of his firstborn he shall lay its
foundation,
and at the cost of his youngest he shall
set up its gates!"

27 So the LORD was with Joshua; and his
fame was in all the land.

The Sin of Achan and Its Punishment

7 But the Israelites broke faith in regard to
the devoted things: Achan son of Carmi
son of Zabdi son of Zerah, of the tribe of
Judah, took some of the devoted things; and
the anger of the LORD burned against the Isra-
elites.

2 Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which
is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to
them, "Go up and spy out the land." And the
men went up and spied out Ai. [3] Then they re-
turned to Joshua and said to him, "Not all the
people need go up; about two or three thou-
sand men should go up and attack Ai. Since
they are so few, do not make the whole people
toil up there." [4] So about three thousand of the
people went up there; and they fled before the
men of Ai. [5] The men of Ai killed about thirty-
six of them, chasing them from outside the
gate as far as Shebarim and killing them on the

a Gk: Heb *devote to destruction* Compare 7.21 *b* Heb *She*

killed (Deut 20.16–17). Although material booty and cattle did not usually fall into the *cherem* category (8.2; 11.14), Jericho is an especially rigorous case (vv. 19, 21, 24). **6.18** According to the principle of contagion, to *take any of the devoted things* (i.e., *cherem*) would place Israel itself in the deadly category of *cherem* (*an object for destruction*). This verse foreshadows Achan's crime (7.21).

6.20 *Straight ahead.* Because Israel encircles the city, it can make a frontal assault from all sides simultaneously. **6.23** Israel's sacral-war encampment has to remain ritually clean (Deut 23.9–14), so Rahab and her family must remain *outside the camp*. **6.25** This note shifts focus away from the fall of the city and onto the story of covenant keeping by and with Rahab, explaining how a foreign group *has lived in Israel ever since*. **6.26** *Cursed before the LORD.* Joshua blocks any reconstruction and resettlement of Jericho (cf. Deut 13.16). 1 Kings 16.34 reports the fulfillment of this curse. A story concerning Elisha gives evidence that Jericho's spring was thought to be unhealthy until he miraculously put it right (2 Kings 2.19–22).

7.1–26 The first of two attacks at Ai is repulsed. The embarrassing defeat is traced to Achan's violation of the decree against taking devoted things (6.17–18). The narrative units in ch. 7 are spliced in such a way that the story of Achan (vv. 1, 6–26) is interrupted by the defeat at Ai (vv. 2–5). *Ai*, lit. "The Ruin," is identified as et-Tell (Arabic for "The Ruin"), two miles (three kilometers) east of Bethel. During the period described in Joshua, et-Tell was at most a small unwalled village nestled amid the remains of a long-ruined walled city from the third millennium BCE. As in the case of Jericho, this narrative is folklore, not history. **7.1** Details about Achan's family background portend the procedure by which his crime will be uncovered (vv. 16–18). Even though Achan acted alone in ignoring Joshua's warning (6.18), the principle of corporate responsibility means that all *the Israelites broke faith* (cf. v. 11), so that *the anger of the LORD* is directed against the entire nation. **7.2** Gathering intelligence was sometimes the first step in a sacral war (2.1; Judg 1.23). **7.3** *Not all ... go up.* As in the first reconnaissance (2.24), these spies bring an optimistic re-

JUDGES

Historical Context

THE BOOK OF JUDGES recounts traditional stories that span a critical period in Israelite history, from the death of Joshua to a tragic and costly civil war. After an incomplete conquest that leaves much land in the hands of Israel's foes (ch. 1), Israel follows a recurring pattern of disloyalty to God followed by oppression by its enemies. Israel then cries out in repentance and the Lord sends deliverers, the so-called judges. These judges are national military leaders (chs. 2–12) or, in the case of Samson, a solitary champion (chs. 13–16). In the end, Israel descends into idolatry, bloodshed, and civil war (chs. 17–21). The period that is the book's background extends from the closing decades of the Late Bronze Age through the Iron I period (ca. 1200–1020 BCE). The 410-year span that results from adding up the periods of oppression, the tenures of the judges, and the periods of "rest" mentioned in the book assumes that the judges governed "all Israel" sequentially. In fact, their leadership was more likely local and overlapping.

Despite sweeping claims in the book of Joshua of conquest of all the land, Judges describes continued warfare with Canaanites, plus challenges to Israel's hegemony posed by various tribal groups (Midianites and Amalekites), by emerging territorial states (Moab and Ammon), and by the arrival of the Philistines on the coast. Equally serious was the threat posed by aspirants to kingship within Israel (e.g., Abimelech, ch. 9) and internal anarchy resulting from the absence of kingship (chs. 17–21). The situation described by Judges continues into the narrative of 1 Samuel, named after the prophet who is also remembered as a "judge" and who facilitated the establishment of the monarchy, anointing first Saul, then David.

Protagonists and Terminology

THE BOOK PRESENTS TWELVE LEADERS: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson. The title, Judges, reflects the fact that a majority of the book's protagonists are said to have "judged" (Hebrew *shāfat*) Israel. The verb is not limited to strictly judicial function, however, but connotes a general exercise of legitimate "rule." Though scholars often describe the judges' leadership sociologically as "charismatic," "the spirit of the LORD" activates the various leaders with very mixed results. Scholars distinguish between "major judges," military chiefs and heroes whose exploits are recounted in stories, and "minor

judges," about whom very little is known apart from their being listed in 10.1–5; 12.7–15. Jephthah is a "major judge" (11.1–12.6), but is also listed in the group of "minor judges" (12.7).

Apart from the introduction (2.16–19), the noun "judge" (Hebrew *shofet*) occurs only once in this book, as a title of the Lord (11.27). As universal Judge, the Lord retains a prerogative that had been attributed to various deities in other ancient Near Eastern societies.

As striking as the absence of the noun "judge" from this book is the presence of the noun "deliverer," or "savior," or its related verb "deliver" in reference to four characters (Othniel, Ehud, Tola, and Samson). It is puzzling, therefore, that this language of deliverance is uniformly absent in regard to those leaders about whom popular lore was most prolific, Deborah, Gideon, and Jephthah. In the case of Gideon, neither "judge" nor "deliverer" language is used. What, then, did Gideon do? Perhaps that is precisely the question. Discerning readers will be alert to a sense of irony throughout the depiction of the judges.

Judges reflects Israel's tradition of sacral war, the conviction that the Lord fought against its enemies as the Divine Warrior. The Lord guided tactics and gave assurance of victory (4.6–7), led supernatural forces into battle (5.20–21), and used panic as an effective weapon (4.15; 7.21–22). Sacral war also could imply the complete slaughter of an enemy population as spoil devoted to the Lord for destruction (1.17; 21.11).

Sources and Development

JUDGES IS PART OF ONE LONG HISTORICAL WORK extending from Joshua through 2 Kings and prefaced by Deuteronomy, which serves as a theological introduction. It continues the Deuteronomistic History (see Introduction to Joshua) from the death of Joshua (Judg 2.8) to just before the birth of Samuel (1 Sam 1). Four stages of development can be discerned in the book. First were various stories of local crises and leaders, classic examples of narrative artistry. These stories, rarely involving more than a few tribes, originated in highland villages that comprised immediate and extended families, the so-called fathers' houses and clans. Israel had begun as a lineage system and developed over time to become an agrarian territorial state. Stories of the judges preserve memories of that tumultuous epoch. Scholars generally think that in the second stage these independent stories were collected for didactic purposes, perhaps by the mid-eighth century BCE. The stories are arranged so that good examples of leadership (Othniel, Deborah, Jephthah) alternate with not so good examples (Ehud, Gideon, Samson), with the whole book centering on Abimelech's abortive reign at Shechem. In the third stage these stories were incorporated into the Deuteronomistic History, composed during the reign of the reforming king Josiah (640–609 BCE) to tell the story of Israel's life in the land. Finally, after the destruction of the nation, this historical work was updated for those living in exile. The era of the judges was enclosed within a grim framework of disobedience and its consequences (1.1–2.5; chs. 17–21).

Israel's possession of the land was often at risk. The stories in Judges provided generations of readers inspiring (though sometimes imperfect) models for resistance and national solidarity. Eventually the kingdoms of Israel and Judah failed, and large numbers were deported from the land. In its final form, Judges gives one answer to what went wrong: disloyalty to God repeatedly resulted in catastrophe. The cyclical pattern of Judges also offered hope in times of national distress. Repentance and obedience might once again lead to deliverance. [ROBERT G. BOLING, revised by RICHARD D. NELSON]

'No.'" 21 But Jael wife of Heber took a tent peg,
and took a hammer in her hand, and went
softly to him and drove the peg into his tem-
ple, until it went down into the ground—he
was lying fast asleep from weariness—and he
died. 22 Then, as Barak came in pursuit of Sis-
era, Jael went out to meet him, and said to
him, "Come, and I will show you the man
whom you are seeking." So he went into her
tent; and there was Sisera lying dead, with the
tent peg in his temple.
23 So on that day God subdued King Jabin
of Canaan before the Israelites. 24 Then the
hand of the Israelites bore harder and harder
on King Jabin of Canaan, until they destroyed
King Jabin of Canaan.

The Song of Deborah

5 Then Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam
sang on that day, saying:
2 "When locks are long in Israel,
when the people offer themselves
willingly—
bless[a] the LORD!
3 "Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes;
to the LORD I will sing,
I will make melody to the LORD, the
God of Israel.
4 "LORD, when you went out from Seir,
when you marched from the region of
Edom,
the earth trembled,
and the heavens poured,
the clouds indeed poured water.
5 The mountains quaked before the LORD,
the One of Sinai,
before the LORD, the God of Israel.
6 "In the days of Shamgar son of Anath,
in the days of Jael, caravans ceased
and travelers kept to the byways.
7 The peasantry prospered in Israel,
they grew fat on plunder,
because you arose, Deborah,
arose as a mother in Israel.
8 When new gods were chosen,
then war was in the gates.
Was shield or spear to be seen
among forty thousand in Israel?
9 My heart goes out to the commanders of
Israel
who offered themselves willingly
among the people.
Bless the LORD.
10 "Tell of it, you who ride on white
donkeys,
you who sit on rich carpets[b]
and you who walk by the way.
11 To the sound of musicians[b] at the
watering places,
there they repeat the triumphs of the
LORD,
the triumphs of his peasantry in Israel.
"Then down to the gates marched the
people of the LORD.

a Or *You who offer yourselves willingly among the people, bless*
b Meaning of Heb uncertain

him *milk*), but her actions lull him into a vulnerable sleep. **4.20** Sisera's request reveals his confidence in Jael, but also his unmanly fear. In Hebrew the question can be understood as "Is there a man here?" **4.21** For a nomadic woman, hammering a *tent peg* would be routine. **4.23–24** These verses are an editorial wrap-up. **5.1–31** The Song of Deborah (and Barak, but the verb in v. 1 is singular) is datable to the twelfth century BCE, not far removed from the events being celebrated. The song exhibits repetitive parallelism familiar from fourteenth-century BCE Ugaritic texts, but there are a number of obscurities in the text. Its depiction of events differs from that of ch. 4 in mentioning six participating tribes rather than two, remaining silent about any role for Jabin, and describing Sisera's death in a different way (see note on 5.27). **5.2** This poem's archaic language makes it difficult to interpret at several points. *Locks are long* may describe vows of military commitment; Samson's long hair was indicative of his vowed status as a Nazirite (13.5). **5.3** *Hear, O kings* announces the general theme: praising the *God of Israel* as testimony to kings such as those recently defeated by the forces of Deborah and Barak. **5.4–5** The singer describes a theophany of the Lord as Divine Warrior, *the One of Sinai*, arriving in Canaan via *Seir* and the *region of Edom*, in southern Transjordan (cf. Deut 33.2–3). **5.6–7** The crisis is framed by the exploits of *Shamgar* and *Jael*. The insecure situation before Israel's victory (v. 6) is contrasted with the good fortune that it brought about (v. 7). The title *mother in Israel* recognizes Deborah's authority and leadership. **5.8** *Shield* and *spear* were aristocratic weapons belonging to professional military men, not the *forty thousand* Israelite peasants. **5.10** Celebration is appropriate for the entire citizenry: for the elite, *who ride* and possess *rich carpets*, and the general populace, *who walk*

12 "Awake, awake, Deborah!
Awake, awake, utter a song!
Arise, Barak, lead away your captives,
O son of Abinoam.
13 Then down marched the remnant of the
noble;
the people of the LORD marched down
for him[a] against the mighty.
14 From Ephraim they set out[b] into the
valley,
following you, Benjamin, with your
kin;
from Machir marched down the
commanders,
and from Zebulun those who bear the
marshal's staff;
15 the chiefs of Issachar came with Deborah,
and Issachar faithful to Barak;
into the valley they rushed out at his
heels.
Among the clans of Reuben
there were great searchings of heart.
16 Why did you tarry among the sheepfolds,
to hear the piping for the flocks?
Among the clans of Reuben
there were great searchings of heart.
17 Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan;
and Dan, why did he abide with the
ships?
Asher sat still at the coast of the sea,
settling down by his landings.
18 Zebulun is a people that scorned death;
Naphtali too, on the heights of the
field.
19 "The kings came, they fought;
then fought the kings of Canaan,
at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo;
they got no spoils of silver.
20 The stars fought from heaven,
from their courses they fought against
Sisera.
21 The torrent Kishon swept them away,
the onrushing torrent, the torrent
Kishon.
March on, my soul, with might!
22 "Then loud beat the horses' hoofs
with the galloping, galloping of his
steeds.
23 "Curse Meroz, says the angel of the LORD,
curse bitterly its inhabitants,
because they did not come to the help of
the LORD,
to the help of the LORD against the
mighty.
24 "Most blessed of women be Jael,
the wife of Heber the Kenite,
of tent-dwelling women most blessed.
25 He asked water and she gave him milk,
she brought him curds in a lordly bowl.
26 She put her hand to the tent peg
and her right hand to the workmen's
mallet;
she struck Sisera a blow,
she crushed his head,
she shattered and pierced his temple.
27 He sank, he fell,
he lay still at her feet;
at her feet he sank, he fell;
where he sank, there he fell dead.
28 "Out of the window she peered,
the mother of Sisera gazed[a] through
the lattice:

a Gk Heb *me* b Cn: Heb *From Ephraim their root* c Gk: Heb *in Amalek* d Gk Compare Tg: Heb *exclaimed*

5.11 *Watering places* were the usual spots to gather for social interaction. **5.14–18** In the setting of the victory celebration, the poet reviews the performance of tribal contingents. Six tribes had responded: *Ephraim, Benjamin, Machir* (western Manasseh), *Zebulun, Issachar,* and *Naphtali*. Four are censured for not responding: *Reuben, Gilead* (possibly Gad), *Dan, Asher*. These ten groups may reflect a stage of organization earlier than the standard twelve-tribe system. Significantly, Judah, Simeon, and Levi are not mentioned. **5.15** *At his heels*, idiomatic for "under his command" (translated *behind him* in 4.10). **5.19–22** It is possible to read these verses as describing a victory won by a timely maneuver by the Lord—a cloudburst and flash flood—that gave an advantage to Israel's foot soldiers over enemy chariots. *Stars* fight as the heavenly army of the Divine Warrior (v. 20); and the *Kishon* River engulfs the enemy (v. 21). The hoofbeats of escaping chariot horses are portrayed vividly. **5.23** *Meroz* (a town or clan?) and the incident cited are otherwise unknown. **5.24–27** This description of the demise of Sisera heaps praise upon Jael. **5.26** A *tent peg* and *mallet* were handy because pitching the tent was women's work. **5.27** In this poetic version, Sisera seems to be standing when attacked in contrast to the situation in 4.21. There are probably sexual implications to the penetrating tent peg and his fall *at her feet* ("between her feet"), intended as a bitterly ironic reversal of the common practice of battle-

'Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarry the hoofbeats of his
chariots?'
29 Her wisest ladies make answer,
indeed, she answers the question
herself:
30 'Are they not finding and dividing the
spoil?—
A girl or two for every man;
spoil of dyed stuffs for Sisera,
spoil of dyed stuffs embroidered,
two pieces of dyed work embroidered
for my neck as spoil?'

31 "So perish all your enemies, O LORD!
But may your friends be like the sun as
it rises in its might."

And the land had rest forty years.

The Midianite Oppression

6 The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. 2 The hand of Midian prevailed over Israel; and because of Midian the Israelites provided for themselves hiding places in the mountains, caves and strongholds. 3 For whenever the Israelites put in seed, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east would come up against them. 4 They would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the land, as far as the neighborhood of Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel, and no sheep or ox or donkey. 5 For they and their livestock would come up, and they would even bring their tents, as thick as locusts; neither they nor their camels could be counted; so they wasted the land as they came in. 6 Thus Israel was greatly impoverished because of Midian; and the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help.

7 When the Israelites cried to the LORD on account of the Midianites, 8 the LORD sent a prophet to the Israelites; and he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt, and brought you out of the house of slavery; 9 and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians, and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you, and gave you their land; 10 and I said to you, 'I am the LORD your God; you shall not pay reverence to the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell.' But you have not given heed to my voice."

The Call of Gideon

11 Now the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. 12 The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty warrior." 13 Gideon answered him, "But sir, if the LORD is with us,

field rape described in v. 30. **5.28** The final scene begins with another woman, the *mother of Sisera* (cf. Deborah as a *mother in Israel*, v. 7), waiting in vain for Sisera's triumphant return. The scene of a woman looking out of a window was common in ancient Near Eastern art and biblical narrative (2 Sam 6.16; 2 Kings 9.30; Prov 7.6). Her reference to *hoofbeats* sounds ironic when read in context with v. 22. **5.30** Contrary to what his mother assumes, Sisera is not capturing girls for his sexual pleasure, but has been ravished himself by a woman. **5.31** *Your friends*, "those who love you." *Forty years* is twice as long as the oppression (4.3) and half as long as the *rest* following Ehud (3.30).

6.1–8.35 Gideon (also identified in ch. 7 as Jerubbaal) mobilizes several central hill-country and Galilean tribes against annual raiding parties from east of the Jordan (Midianites, Amalekites, and other easterners). **6.1–10** This introduction uses the now familiar framework (apostasy, oppression, appeal for help; see note on 2.11–23) in vv. 1–6. Exploitation originating from distant oases was made possible by the recent domestication of the camel. **6.2** *Midian* was a desert confederation sometimes in alliance (Ex 2.15–4.31; 18.1–27) and sometimes at war (Num 25–31) with Israel. **6.3** *Amalekites* were traditional enemies during the wilderness era (Ex 17.8–16). **6.5** *Locusts*, a common image to describe catastrophic destruction (7.12; Isa 33.4; Jer 51.14; Joel 1.6–7; Nah 3.15). **6.7–10** The warning in 2.3 that other gods would be a *snare* is coming true. This time, when *Israelites cried*, instead of the expected deliverer the Lord sends a *prophet* who delivers an indictment, as the angel of the Lord did in 2.1–5. **6.11–32** The Lord receives a new altar (vv. 11–24), and an altar of Baal is destroyed (vv. 25–32). Gideon is slow to recognize the voice of the Lord, foreshadowing Israel's problem in ch. 10. **6.11** Gideon (in contrast to Othniel, Ehud, and Deborah) is first approached by *the angel of the LORD*, a visible manifestation of the Lord's presence in human form, who at points becomes transparent to the Lord himself. *Ophrah*, a village of Manasseh not far from Shechem. *Joash* presides over a pagan shrine. *Abiezrite*. See Josh 17.2. *Gideon* means "Hewer" or "Hacker" in Hebrew, probably a nickname based on his reforming activities. Under normal circumstances, wheat would be threshed on a windy hilltop, not in a *wine press*. **6.12** The designation *mighty warrior* sounds ironic; it does not describe Gideon in chs. 6–7 very well.

why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian." 14 Then the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; I hereby commission you." 15 He responded, "But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." 16 The LORD said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall strike down the Midianites, every one of them." 17 Then he said to him, "If now I have found favor with you, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. 18 Do not depart from here until I come to you, and bring out my present, and set it before you." And he said, "I will stay until you return."

19 So Gideon went into his house and prepared a kid, and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour; the meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the oak and presented them. 20 The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. 21 Then the angel of the LORD reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes; and the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight. 22 Then Gideon perceived that it was the angel of the LORD; and Gideon said, "Help me, Lord GOD! For I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face." 23 But the LORD said to him, "Peace be to you; do not fear, you shall not die." 24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it, The LORD is peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites.

25 That night the LORD said to him, "Take your father's bull, the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that belongs to your father, and cut down the sacred pole[a] that is beside it; 26 and build an altar to the LORD your God on the top of the stronghold here, in proper order; then take the second bull, and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the sacred pole[a] that you shall cut down." 27 So Gideon took ten of his servants, and did as the LORD had told him; but because he was too afraid of his family and the townspeople to do it by day, he did it by night.

Gideon Destroys the Altar of Baal

28 When the townspeople rose early in the morning, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the sacred pole[a] beside it was cut down, and the second bull was offered on the altar that had been built. 29 So they said to one another, "Who has done this?" After searching and inquiring, they were told, "Gideon son of Joash did it." 30 Then the townspeople said to Joash, "Bring out your son, so that he may die, for he has pulled down the altar of Baal and cut down the sacred pole[a] beside it." 31 But Joash said to all who were arrayed against him, "Will you contend for Baal? Or will you defend his cause? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been pulled down." 32 Therefore on that day Gideon[b] was called Jerubbaal, that is to say, "Let Baal contend against him," because he pulled down his altar.

33 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east came to-

a Heb *Asherah* b Heb *he*

6.13 The pronoun *you* in v. 12 is singular. Gideon misses the point and replies about the plight of *us*. **6.14** The figure of the angel of the Lord becomes transparent to the LORD himself. **6.15** Objections are a customary feature of call stories (cf. Moses, Ex 3.11; Saul, 1 Sam 9.21). **6.16–17** *I will be with you* is directly reminiscent of Ex 3, as is the request for *a sign* to certify the Lord's call. **6.19** An *ephah of flour*, more than a bushel, signals Gideon's commendably generous hospitality. **6.22** Gideon's response is typical (Gen 32.30). **6.24** One reason the tradition preserved this story was to validate a local altar of sacrifice and explain its name. *Peace* (Hebrew *shalom*) implies comprehensive well-being, individual and communal. **6.25** The dismantling of Joash's *altar* and the hacking down of the *sacred pole* associated with the goddess Asherah will provide legitimacy for Gideon's alternate name, *Jerubbaal* (v. 32). **6.26** Using the sacred pole of Asherah as firewood was a disrespectful and deliberate desecration. **6.27** Gideon remains an ambivalent figure (cf. vv. 15, 17). He is prosperous enough to command the assistance of *ten... servants* but is only brave enough to act *by night*. **6.30–31** Joash, facing the zeal of his son, is no longer an avid supporter of Baal. The case against Baal is self-evident. A god unable to defend its own altar deserves no defense from others. **6.32** Reflecting his father's challenge in v. 31, Gideon's assertive action vindicates his name *Jerubbaal*, Hebrew "Let Baal Con-

hand of Naomi, you are also acquiring Ruth[a] the Moabite, the widow of the dead man, to maintain the dead man's name on his inheritance." [6]At this, the next-of-kin[b] said, "I cannot redeem it for myself without damaging my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

[7]Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one took off a sandal and gave it to the other; this was the manner of attesting in Israel. [8]So when the next-of-kin[b] said to Boaz, "Acquire it for yourself," he took off his sandal. [9]Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have acquired from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. [10]I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, to be my wife, to maintain the dead man's name on his inheritance, in order that the name of the dead may not be cut off from his kindred and from the gate of his native place; today you are witnesses." [11]Then all the people who were at the gate, along with the elders, said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you produce children in Ephrathah and bestow a name in Bethlehem; [12]and, through the children that the LORD will give you by this young woman, may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah."

The Genealogy of David

[13]So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the LORD made her conceive, and she bore a son. [14]Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin;[b] and may his name be renowned in Israel! [15]He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him." [16]Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. [17]The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

[18]Now these are the descendants of Perez: Perez became the father of Hezron, [19]Hezron of Ram, Ram of Amminadab, [20]Amminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon of Salmon, [21]Salmon of Boaz, Boaz of Obed, [22]Obed of Jesse, and Jesse of David.

a OL Vg: Heb *from the hand of Naomi and from Ruth* *b* Or *one with the right to redeem*

deeming of land would fall within the duties of the *go'el* to keep the land in the family. **4.5** *Acquiring Ruth.* It is less clear that a *go'el* would be obligated to marry the widow of the deceased landowner. This may be an early form of levirate marriage, which in Deut 25.5–10 is limited to the brother of the deceased (cf. also Gen 38). Or it may be a ploy by Boaz to protect the interests of Naomi and Ruth by ensuring that Ruth and her children would not be separated from this landholding, as would happen if the kinsman redeemed the land but did not marry Ruth. Boaz accepts the double obligation of acquiring the land and Ruth, in order *to maintain the dead man's name on his inheritance* (4.9–10). This echoes the language of the levirate in Deuteronomy. Regardless of the exact legal obligation (which is disputed), Boaz's loyalty to family emerges strongly. In this his loyalty mirrors that of Ruth. **4.7** *Took off a sandal.* This ancient practice, which needed to be explained even to biblical readers, is not to be confused with the pulling off of the sandal in the case of a brother who declines to marry the widow (Deut 25.9). The sandal is a physical representation of the conveying of goods or rights from one party to another. **4.12** *Tamar . . . Judah.* See Gen 38. **4.16** *His nurse.* The child's guardian, like a godmother, not a wet nurse. **4.17** *A son has been born to Naomi,* not a biological son or even a biological grandson, but a son in that he replaces the family that Naomi has lost. The son represents the continuation of the family. Naomi is the central focus at the end of the story, even as she was at the beginning. **4.18–22** The genealogy begins with Perez, the first of the twins born to Judah by Tamar (Gen 38.29). The places of honor in the list, seventh and tenth, are occupied by Boaz, the hero of our story, and David, the preeminent king of Israel and founder of the dynasty of Judah. The genealogy turns the story into a chapter in the ancestry of David and raises the theme of family continuity to a theme of national continuity. The story of a family becomes the story of the royal family and hence the nation.

1 SAMUEL

THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL describe the origins of kingship in Israel and recount the reigns of the first two kings, Saul and David. The two books fall roughly into five narrative sections followed by a miscellany of assorted materials. The first section is the story of Samuel (1 Sam 1.1–7.17), which provides a transition between the period of the judges and the monarchy. The account is dominated by a view of the prophet as a divinely appointed leader capable of functioning as priest, seer, war leader, and judge. It contains as a strong background theme the condemnation of the priestly house of Eli and rejection of the priesthood of Shiloh.

The second section describes the inauguration of kingship in Israel (1 Sam 8.1–15.34). The central figure is Saul, Israel's first king, who is introduced in auspicious terms as a tall, earnest young man capable of leading Israel on the battlefield. He continues to share the stage with Samuel, however, and the predominant atmosphere is suspicious of monarchy in general and of Saul's kingship in particular. Not long after Saul has proven himself in battle, his fortunes change and his life begins to unravel. Soon he is condemned for failing to obey the prophetically mediated divine word.

The third narrative section is the story of David's rise to power (1 Sam 15.35–2 Sam 5.10). It is animated by the conflict between the young David, to whom the Lord has promised Saul's throne, and the increasingly jealous and often irrational old king. David is depicted in the most favorable terms as handsome and charismatic, endowed with extraordinary skills as a musician and soldier, and consistently successful in everything he undertakes because, as the narrator repeatedly reminds us, "The LORD is with him."

The fourth section records a number of events from the reign of David (2 Sam 5.11–12.31). It centers upon the oracle of Nathan in ch. 7, in which David is promised that his descendants will rule after him in Jerusalem in an unending dynasty and that his son will build a temple for the Lord. The fifth section describes the unsuccessful revolt of David's son Absalom (2 Sam 13.1–20.22). David is now a mature and tragic figure who is obliged to flee Jerusalem in fear for his life and very nearly loses his throne while witnessing the death of two of his sons. At the end of 2 Samuel is a miscellany (2 Sam 20.23–24.25) containing poetry attributed to David, lists of his various officers and warriors, and a variety of narrative materials loosely related to other parts of Samuel and Kings.

Literary History

THE LITERARY FOUNDATION of 1 and 2 Samuel is a group of early narrative sources upon which later editors and compilers drew. At least four of these can be specifically identified. The first is the ark narrative, which is found in 1 Sam 4.1–7.1 and parts of 1 Sam 2 (some scholars would also include parts of 2 Sam 6). This narrative explains the capture of the ark by the Philistines as a consequence of the Lord's anger over the corruption of the priesthood of Shiloh (see 2.12–17, 22–25) and shows how the Lord used the occasion to afflict the Philistines with plague. The second early source, which is much less well defined, is a cycle of stories about Saul. These stories underlie various passages in 1 Samuel, including the tale of Saul's anointing in chs. 9–10, the account of his liberation of Jabesh-gilead in ch. 11, and the description of his Philistine wars in chs. 13–14. The third early source is the story of David's rise to power (1 Sam 16.14–2 Sam 5.10), which is designed to demonstrate David's innocence of wrongdoing in his conflict with the house of Saul and to explain his dramatic ascent to the throne as a consequence of divine favor. The fourth early source is the account of Absalom's revolt in 2 Sam 13–20. Its purpose is to disclose the private circumstances leading to the civil war that forced David temporarily into exile. The account explains the death of both Absalom and Amnon, David's firstborn, and it seems to have been combined with the story of David's death and the accession of Solomon in 1 Kings 1–2 to constitute a succession narrative, explaining how Solomon came to the throne instead of one of his several older brothers.

In their present form 1 and 2 Samuel are part of the Deuteronomistic History, which extends from Deuteronomy through 2 Kings (see also the Introduction to Joshua). It recounts the history of the Israelites from the time of their arrival on the plains of Moab and entry into the promised land until the time of their deportation to exile in Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. The intervening events are reported and evaluated according to principles derived from the Deuteronomic law code (Deut 12–26). Deuteronomistic editing is light in 1 and 2 Samuel, especially in contrast to Judges or Kings. The only major passages that can be attributed to the historian are the oracle against the house of Eli in 1 Sam 2.27–36 establishing the ascendancy of the Zadokite priesthood; the historical retrospective in Samuel's farewell address in 1 Sam 12.6–15, which belongs to a series of such speeches by major figures in the history; and the oracle of Nathan in 2 Sam 7 proclaiming the Davidic dynasty and the erection of the temple in Jerusalem.

Many of the stories in 1 Samuel and to a lesser extent 2 Samuel have been influenced editorially by a point of view that regards the institution of kingship with suspicion while looking to the prophet as the one who can provide a check on royal abuses of power and serve as an avenue through which the divine will can be expressed. In certain parts of Samuel this prophetic viewpoint has given the narrative its primary shape. These include the story of Samuel's childhood and rise to power in 1 Sam 1–8, Samuel's farewell address and the two accounts of the rejection of Saul in 1 Sam 12–15, the story of the anointing of David in 1 Sam 16.1–13, and the account of the Bathsheba affair and Nathan's condemnation of the house of David in 2 Sam 11–12. Though some scholars date this prophetic material to the exile and associate it with the Deuteronomistic revision of the story, others argue that it derives from the time of the monarchy and underlies the final Deuteronomistic edition. In any case, it is necessary to recognize within it a group of passages that present the monarchy in a wholly negative way that makes no

room for the Deuteronomistic affirmation of Davidic kingship or even the concept of a prophetically constrained monarchy. These passages include the accounts of Samuel acting as judge in 1 Sam 7.2–17, the people's demand for a king in 8.1–22, the election of Saul as king in 10.17–27a, and Samuel's farewell address in 12.1–25. This material is united not only by its retrospective view of the institution of kingship as a failure, but also by its common representation of the city of Mizpah as the meeting place of all Israel (cf. 1 Sam 7.5; 10.17), a historical situation that existed only after the destruction of Jerusalem, when Mizpah served as the Babylonian provincial capital and headquarters of the government of Gedaliah (2 Kings 25.23). The Mizpah material is best understood as an exilic redaction of the story of the origin of the monarchy told from a uniformly hostile point of view.

The story of the history of Israel recorded in the books of Samuel and Kings is largely retold in the books of Chronicles, which use the books of Samuel and Kings as major sources. That retelling has its own emphases and interests, reflecting the concerns of a later period in the history of Israel.

The Text

FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, not all of them clear, the Hebrew text of 1 and 2 Samuel has come down to us in defective form. For this reason, translators must rely heavily on the Septuagint and other ancient versions as well as three fragmentary Samuel manuscripts from Qumran (4QSam[a, b, c]). [P. KYLE MCCARTER JR.]

Samuel's Birth and Dedication

1 There was a certain man of Ramathaim, a
Zuphite[a] from the hill country of
Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Je-
roham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuph,
an Ephraimite. 2 He had two wives; the name
of the one was Hannah, and the name of the
other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but
Hannah had no children.
3 Now this man used to go up year by year
from his town to worship and to sacrifice to
the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two
sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests
of the LORD. 4 On the day when Elkanah sacri-
ficed, he would give portions to his wife Pe-
ninnah and to all her sons and daughters; 5 but
to Hannah he gave a double portion,[b] because
he loved her, though the LORD had closed her
womb. 6 Her rival used to provoke her severely,
to irritate her, because the LORD had closed
her womb. 7 So it went on year by year; as often
as she went up to the house of the LORD, she
used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept
and would not eat. 8 Her husband Elkanah said
to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do
you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not
more to you than ten sons?"
9 After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh,
Hannah rose and presented herself before the
LORD.[c] Now Eli the priest was sitting on the
seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the
LORD. 10 She was deeply distressed and prayed

a Compare Gk and 1 Chr 6.35-36: Heb *Ramathaim-zophim*
b Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain *c* Gk: Heb lacks *and presented herself before the* LORD

1.1–28 The auspicious story of the birth of Samuel, who dominates the first half of 1 Samuel, and of his dedication as a Nazirite (see vv. 11, 22). **1.1** *Ramathaim*, NT Arimathea, may have been in the northern Shephelah near Timnah and Lod. *Elkanah*, though called an Ephraimite here, is given a levitical genealogy in 1 Chr 6.26, where he is listed as a member of the clan of Kohath, which had special responsibility for the ark (see Num 3.29–31); this qualifies his son Samuel for the priestly duties he carries out in chs. 2–3. On Elkanah's designation as a *Zuphite*, see note on 9.5. **1.3** *Shiloh*, in the Ephraimite hills about twenty miles north-northeast of Jerusalem, was the central sanctuary of the Israelites at the time of Samuel's birth. **1.6** *Her rival*, i.e., Peninnah. The Hebrew word became a technical term for a second wife or co-wife in the rabbinic period. **1.7** The references to the *house of the LORD* in this story are surprising in view of the biblical tradition that no temple existed before the one in Jerusalem (see 2 Sam 7.6; 1 Kings 8.16), but the Shilonite

bringing good news, I seized him and killed
him at Ziklag—this was the reward I gave him
for his news. 11 How much more then, when
wicked men have killed a righteous man on
his bed in his own house! And now shall I not
require his blood at your hand, and destroy
you from the earth?" 12 So David commanded
the young men, and they killed them; they cut
off their hands and feet, and hung their bodies
beside the pool at Hebron. But the head of
Ishbaal[a] they took and buried in the tomb of
Abner at Hebron.

David Anointed King of All Israel

5 Then all the tribes of Israel came to David
at Hebron, and said, "Look, we are your
bone and flesh. 2 For some time, while Saul
was king over us, it was you who led out Israel
and brought it in. The LORD said to you: It is
you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel,
you who shall be ruler over Israel." 3 So all the
elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron;
and King David made a covenant with them at
Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed
David king over Israel. 4 David was thirty years
old when he began to reign; and he reigned
forty years. 5 At Hebron he reigned over Judah
seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem
he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-
three years.

Jerusalem Made Capital of the United Kingdom

6 The king and his men marched to Jerusalem
against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the
land, who said to David, "You will not come in
here, even the blind and the lame will turn you
back"—thinking, "David cannot come in
here." 7 Nevertheless David took the strong-
hold of Zion, which is now the city of David.
8 David had said on that day, "Whoever would
strike down the Jebusites, let him get up the
water shaft to attack the lame and the blind,
those whom David hates."[b] Therefore it is
said, "The blind and the lame shall not come
into the house." 9 David occupied the strong-
hold, and named it the city of David. David
built the city all around from the Millo in-
ward. 10 And David became greater and
greater, for the LORD, the God of hosts, was
with him.

11 King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to

a Heb *Ish-bosheth* b Another reading is *those who hate David*

the Sea of Galilee. **4.10** David recalls events of 1.2–16. **4.12** *Tomb of Abner.* See 3.32.

5.1–5 David becomes king a second time, now of the northern tribes. **5.1–2** These two verses, which have a number of verbal parallels with the oracle of Nathan in ch. 7, were inserted by a Deuteronomistic editor in whose time it was natural for the Israelites to describe themselves in relation to David, a Judahite, as *your bone and flesh;* in the older narrative (19:13) David uses the same expression to signify his kinship to the people of Judah in contrast to the people of Israel. David *led out Israel and brought it in,* i.e., he led the army (see Num 27:17; 1 Chr 2:11; cf. 1 Sam 18:13, 16; 29:6). For David as Israel's *shepherd,* see 2 Sam 7:7; *ruler* (Hebrew *nagîd*) translates the same word as *prince* in 7:8 (cf. note on 1 Sam 9:16). **5.3** A second, older account of David's appointment as king. By making a *covenant* with the Israelite elders David is binding himself to certain obligations in return for fealty. **5.4–5** These chronological notices belong to the Deuteronomistic framework of the narrative (see Introduction; 12:10–11; note on 1 Sam 13:1). Biblical scholars generally date David's reign to the first half of the tenth century, ca. 1000–960 BCE. **5.6–16** David's private army successfully besieges the city of the Jebusites. **5.6** *Jebusites,* the indigenous inhabitants of Jerusalem whom Joshua failed to drive away (Josh 15:63; Judg 1:21). There have been many attempts to explain the role of the *blind* and the *lame* in this account. The present translation reflects the interpretation that the Jebusites are taunting David: "We are so much stronger than you that even our blind and lame can keep you out." **5.7** *Stronghold of Zion,* a fortified hilltop on the southeast corner of the later city. In the strict sense, then, *Zion* and *the city of David* refer only to this hill (see 1 Kings 8:1), but both terms were extended to mean the city as a whole. **5.8** At this point in the Chronicler's version of the capture of Jerusalem (1 Chr 11:6) Joab wins the position as commander in chief of David's army by leading the attack on the city. *Water shaft,* a vertical passage used by the Jebusites to have access to the Gihon, Jerusalem's primary water source, from within the city walls. Another possible translation of the Hebrew word rendered *water shaft* is "windpipe"; David might be telling his troops to strike at the windpipe, dealing only fatal blows so as not to leave the city full of maimed people (*the lame and the blind*). The narrator uses the story to explain a rule excluding the lame and blind from the *house,* i.e., the temple (cf. Lev 21:16–23; Deut 23:1). **5.9** *Named.* Ancient Near Eastern conquerors often renamed cities in their own honor. *Millo,* Hebrew, "the Fill," an earthwork of some kind, perhaps a building platform created by filling a ravine; Solomon amplified or rebuilt it (1 Kings 9:15, 24; 11:27). **5.10** The old story of David's rise to power (see Introduction) probably ended here with a final recapitulation of its central motif (see 1 Sam 16:18; 18:14, 28). **5.11** *King Hiram* will later

David, along with cedar trees, and carpenters
and masons who built David a house. 12 David
then perceived that the LORD had established
him king over Israel, and that he had exalted
his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.
13 In Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron,
David took more concubines and wives; and
more sons and daughters were born to David.
14 These are the names of those who were born
to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Na-
than, Solomon, 15 Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Ja-
phia, 16 Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

Philistine Attack Repulsed

17 When the Philistines heard that David had
been anointed king over Israel, all the Philis-
tines went up in search of David; but David
heard about it and went down to the strong-
hold. 18 Now the Philistines had come and
spread out in the valley of Rephaim. 19 David
inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go up against
the Philistines? Will you give them into my
hand?" The LORD said to David, "Go up; for I
will certainly give the Philistines into your
hand." 20 So David came to Baal-perazim, and
David defeated them there. He said, "The
LORD has burst forth against[a] my enemies be-
fore me, like a bursting flood." Therefore that
place is called Baal-perazim.[b] 21 The Philis-
tines abandoned their idols there, and David
and his men carried them away.
22 Once again the Philistines came up, and
were spread out in the valley of Rephaim.
23 When David inquired of the LORD, he said,
"You shall not go up; go around to their rear,
and come upon them opposite the balsam
trees. 24 When you hear the sound of marching
in the tops of the balsam trees, then be on the
alert; for then the LORD has gone out before
you to strike down the army of the Philis-
tines." 25 David did just as the LORD had com-
manded him; and he struck down the Philis-
tines from Geba all the way to Gezer.

David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem

6 David again gathered all the chosen men
of Israel, thirty thousand. 2 David and all
the people with him set out and went from
Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of
God, which is called by the name of the LORD
of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim.
3 They carried the ark of God on a new cart,
and brought it out of the house of Abinadab,
which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio,[c] the
sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart

a Heb *paraz* b That is *Lord of Bursting Forth* c Or *and his brother*

supply Solomon with the skilled workers and materials necessary for the construction of the temple (see 1 Kings 5:1–10); extrabiblical sources indicate that his reign was long and productive. *Tyre,* port and chief city of Phoenicia, ancient Lebanon; it was about fifty miles south of Beirut. For millennia, the cedars of Lebanon were prized for use in the building of temples and royal residences; for David's house of *cedar,* see also 7:2. **5.12** Language anticipating that of the dynastic promise in ch. 7 (see esp. 7:12). **5.13–15** Sons born to David in Jerusalem (see also 1 Chr 14:3–4). For David's sons born in Hebron, cf. 3:2–5. For a composite listing, see 1 Chr 3:1–9. Of the sons mentioned here, only *Solomon* will play a significant role in the story. **5.17–25** A miscellany detailing David's success in the Philistine wars. **5.17** *Stronghold,* probably not Zion (vv. 7, 9), but Adullam, a Judahite fortress about sixteen miles to the southwest where David sought refuge in the past (see 1 Sam 22:1, 4; 24:22) and where he will be in another encounter with Philistines in the valley of Rephaim (see 2 Sam 23:13, 14). **5.18** *Valley of Rephaim,* usually identified with a plain southwest of Jerusalem; it formed part of the boundary of the tribal territories of Benjamin and Judah (see Josh 15:8; 18:16). **5.20** *Baal-perazim* ("the lord of Perazim") must have been a sanctuary on or near Mount Perazim (see Isa 28:21); here its name is playfully traced to David's victory. **5.21** Just as the Philistines carried off the ark after their victory in 1 Sam 4:1–11, David and his men now carry away *their idols* (lit. "gods"). **5.23** *Balsam trees,* obscure; perhaps some kind of tree or bush or a place-name, "Bachaim." **5.24** The *sound of marching* will indicate that *the LORD has gone out* as the Divine Warrior to fight on David's behalf. **5.25** *Geba,* which was northeast of Jerusalem (see 1 Sam 13:3), should be emended to "Gibeon," which was northwest of the city (see 2:12) and therefore more suited to the geography of the present passage. *Gezer* was about fifteen miles west of Gibeon in the direction of the Philistine plain.

6.1–23 David installs the chief symbol of the religion of Israel in his new capital city. **6.2** *Baale-judah,* another name for Kiriath-jearim (cf. Josh 15:9), where the ark has been since its return from Philistia (see 1 Sam 7:2). **6.2** The *ark of God,* the most sacred object in Israelite worship, marks the presence of the Lord. *The LORD . . . cherubim.* See note on 1 Sam 4:4. **6.3** The cart in which the ark returned from Philistia was burned in a sacrifice (1 Sam 6:14), and in any case *a new cart* is necessary for ritual purposes; see note at 1 Sam 6:7. *The house of Abinadab, which was on the hill.* See 1 Sam 6:21; 7:1. *Uzzah and Ahio* were not mentioned in 1 Sam 7:1, where we were told that Abinadab's son Eleazar was consecrated for service with the

ISAIAH

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH is a composite work, the product of several different prophets who ministered at different periods in the history of Israel. Scholars normally distinguish between three main sections in the book: chs. 1–39, referred to as First Isaiah and attributed in general to the eighth-century BCE Judean prophet whose name the book bears; chs. 40–55, referred to as Second Isaiah, or Deutero-Isaiah, and attributed to an unknown prophet who lived in Babylon during the Babylonian exile of the sixth century; and chs. 56–66, referred to as Third Isaiah, or Trito-Isaiah, and attributed to a prophet or prophets who lived in Judah after the return from Babylonian exile in 539 BCE.

First Isaiah

ACCORDING TO THE SUPERSCRIPTION (1.1), Isaiah son of Amoz prophesied in Jerusalem during the reign of the four Judean kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. If the vision in 6.1 was Isaiah's inaugural vision, he began prophesying in the year of Uzziah's death (ca. 738 BCE), and although the end of his ministry is less certain, it extended at least until 701 and perhaps as late as 688. Isaiah's datable oracles cluster in three main periods: the period of the Syro-Ephraimite war (735–732 BCE), when Syria and Israel attacked Judah (7.1–2); the period of anti-Assyrian agitation in the west against Sargon II (ca. 720–710); and the period of Hezekiah's revolt against Sennacherib (ca. 705–701; possibly again in 689–88). There is evidence that during his long ministry Isaiah adapted and reused early oracles in new historical settings; some oracles originally directed against Syria and Israel at the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war were later given an anti-Assyrian slant.

Though the editorial process cannot be fully recovered, the genuine Isaian oracles seem to have been preserved in several subcollections. Chs. 1–5 primarily contain oracles against God's own people. The core of chs. 6–11 appears to be a collection from the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war. Chs. 13–23 contain oracles against the nations; chs. 28–33 have oracles on the revolt against Sennacherib.

Not all the material in chs. 1–39 can be attributed to Isaiah of Jerusalem, however. In addition to individual oracles whose authenticity is questioned by one scholar or another, three major blocks of material in chs. 1–39 are clearly not the work of Isaiah of Jerusalem. Chs. 36–39 are largely prose narrative taken from 2 Kings 18.13–20.19 and secondarily inserted into the

book of Isaiah. Chs. 34–35 are much closer in style and content to Second or Third Isaiah and should probably be dated to the exilic or postexilic period. Chs. 24–27, often referred to as the Isaiah Apocalypse, contain protoapocalyptic oracles that stand in marked contrast to those of Isaiah of Jerusalem. Although Isaiah's oracles are rooted in particular historical contexts and his threats and promises do not dissolve the reality of those contexts, the oracles in chs. 24–27 are very difficult to root in any historical context and are marked by a heavy dependence on mythological motifs. Scholars normally date these chapters to the early sixth century BCE or later.

Isaiah of Jerusalem was rooted in the Zion tradition, which celebrated God as the great king of heaven and earth, Jerusalem (Zion) as the city God chose to be his royal dwelling, and the kings of the Davidic line as God's anointed vice-regents on earth. The influence of all three aspects of this tradition is evident in the prophet's message. Isaiah's inaugural vision (6.1–4) portrays God as the exalted king, from whose terrifying holiness even the most august angels must hide their eyes. That vision colors the prophet's attitude toward anything that humans might lift up as a rival for the fear and allegiance that rightly belong only to the divine suzerain (see 2.12–22; 8.13). Isaiah assumed that God had founded Zion/Jerusalem (14.32), lived in it (8.18), and hence would ultimately save it. Nevertheless, since the holy God would not live in a moral slum, a morally defiled Jerusalem must be purified by judgment before the city could be saved (1.21–28; 29.1–8). Isaiah's adherence to the Davidic royal tradition is clear from his assurance to Ahaz (7.3–17) and his several portrayals of the ideal king (9.1–7; 11.1–10; 32.1–2).

Second Isaiah

CHAPTERS 40–55 PRESUPPOSE an Israelite audience living in Babylon toward the end of the Babylonian exile (597–539 BCE). The prophet announces to his listeners that the end of their exile in Babylon is imminent. Babylon, not Assyria, is Israel's main enemy, and the burden of the prophet's message is the promise of deliverance, not the threat of judgment. Moreover, the prophet twice mentions the Persian ruler Cyrus (44.28; 45.1) as a figure who has come to the attention of his audience. Such notice certainly presupposes Cyrus's dethroning of his Median overlord Astyages (550) and perhaps Cyrus's defeat of the Lydian king Croesus (547/6) as well. Thus this anonymous prophet's work can probably be dated between 545 and 539 BCE.

Though clearly dependent on First Isaiah's message, Second Isaiah is also easily distinguishable. Second Isaiah shares the eighth-century prophet's emphasis on the holiness of God and his vision of God as the great king, and he at least adapts the earlier prophet's ideal of the Davidic king, democratizing it to apply it to the entire nation. Unlike First Isaiah, however, the message of Second Isaiah is primarily that of consolation, and this message is couched in a distinctive style. In relatively long, markedly lyrical oracles, Second Isaiah reassures the exiles that God still controls history. Despite present appearances, the Lord will soon demonstrate his power by bringing the Israelites back to their own country in a second exodus more glorious than the first. Before this God, who has created all things, the Babylonian idols are as nothing; God's judgment on both the Babylonians and their gods is imminent.

Third Isaiah

CHAPTERS 56–66 ARE SO SIMILAR stylistically to Second Isaiah that they must be attributed either to the same author or to some disciple or disciples who used the poetry of Second Isaiah as a model. The historical setting presupposed is, however, different from that of Second Isaiah.

The audience addressed by Third Isaiah is once more living in the land of Judah. Isa 66.1 suggests that work had already begun on rebuilding the temple, work completed in the years 520–515 BCE. The initial return from Babylonian exile has already taken place, but this second exodus has not been as glorious as Second Isaiah predicted, and life for the returnees in Judah remains very harsh. In these difficult circumstances there are both economic oppression and, in an attempt to cope with life's problems, a resurgence in the pagan rituals long indigenous in Israel. In response to this situation Third Isaiah announces God's imminent judgment on the oppressors and syncretists. The prophet promises the righteous that God's glorious deliverance of Israel, long promised by Second Isaiah, is soon to be realized. Soon the wealth of the nations will pour into Jerusalem along with the rest of Israel's exiles, and the shame and sorrow of the recent past will be replaced with eternal joy and prosperity.

An Overarching Unity

DESPITE THE DIFFERENT HISTORICAL SETTINGS to which the various parts of the book may be attributed and the clear evidence of multiple authorship, there is also a certain overarching unity to the book. All parts of the book share a common theological tradition, and the later parts seem to take up, adapt, respond to, or reverse announcements made in earlier parts of the book while staying in that same theological tradition. Like most other prophetic books, the book of Isaiah moves in a general way from oracles predominantly of judgment to those of salvation. In response to these observations, recent scholarship has begun to turn its primary attention away from the traditional historical-critical issues of historical setting and authorship toward an attempt to explain this overarching unity. Some scholars see this unity as the result of a thorough reediting of the book by the latest authors or their disciples in the exilic or postexilic periods. In its most extreme form, this scholarly trend also explores how the prophetic collection as a whole has been edited to shape interconnections within the whole prophetic corpus.

Most scholars, even of the most traditional historical-critical mold, would admit there has been some late editing of the earlier parts of the book, but the evidence for a thorough, intentional, coherent editing of the book as a whole is not very persuasive. Such reconstructions are far more hypothetical than the reconstructions of traditional historical criticism. Historical reconstructions at least have attested external historical events as a control over pure speculation. Battles and political crises are public events that leave records elsewhere than in the prophetic book itself. In contrast, editorial work by its very nature is private and, barring the discovery of earlier manuscripts showing variant text forms, the reconstruction of such work never rises above the level of more or less plausible hypotheses. In this author's opinion, the editorial processes even within the material that may be confidently attributed to the eighth-century BCE Isaiah of Jerusalem are often less than transparent. Thus the opinion reflected in these notes is that the overarching unity of the book owes more to a common theological tradition in which all the authors stood than to any consistent and coherent editing the book has undergone. The common theological tradition and the fact that the later authors were responding to and commenting on the earlier oracles in the book are sufficient explanation for the overarching unity.

[J. J. M. ROBERTS]

1 The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which
he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in
the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Heze-
kiah, kings of Judah.

The Wickedness of Judah

2 Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth;
for the LORD has spoken:
I reared children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.
3 The ox knows its owner,
and the donkey its master's crib;
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand.

4 Ah, sinful nation,
people laden with iniquity,
offspring who do evil,
children who deal corruptly,
who have forsaken the LORD,
who have despised the Holy One of
Israel,
who are utterly estranged!

5 Why do you seek further beatings?
Why do you continue to rebel?
The whole head is sick,
and the whole heart faint.

6 From the sole of the foot even to the
head,
there is no soundness in it,
but bruises and sores
and bleeding wounds;
they have not been drained, or
bound up,
or softened with oil.

7 Your country lies desolate,
your cities are burned with fire;
in your very presence
aliens devour your land;
it is desolate, as overthrown by
foreigners.
8 And daughter Zion is left
like a booth in a vineyard,
like a shelter in a cucumber field,
like a besieged city.
9 If the LORD of hosts
had not left us a few survivors,
we would have been like Sodom,
and become like Gomorrah.

10 Hear the word of the LORD,
you rulers of Sodom!
Listen to the teaching of our God,
you people of Gomorrah!

1.1 Superscription. In contrast to other superscriptions found in Isaiah (2.1; 13.1; 14.28; 15.1; 17.1; 19.1; 21.1, 11, 13; 22.1; 23.1; 30.6), this superscription is intended as a heading for all of chs. 1–39 (cf. Jer 1.1–3; Ezek 1.1–3). It characterizes the book as a prophetic message from God given to Judah by Isaiah, and it puts the message in a limited historical context. **1.2–20** God brings a legal suit against his people because of their breach of the Mosaic covenant. **1.2–3** The accusation. *Heavens* and *earth* are summoned as witnesses (cf. Deut 32.1; Ps 50; Mic 6.1–8) in this lawsuit because they were witnesses when the covenant was originally made (Deut 4.23–26; 30.19; 31.24–30). God, the father of the people of Israel, charges them with being rebellious children (Deut 32.5–6), a crime subject to the death penalty in Israelite law (Deut 21.18–21). **1.3** *Israel* is sometimes used as a specific reference to the Northern Kingdom, but here it is an inclusive designation for God's people, since Zion, the capital city of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, is mentioned (v. 8). The nation's behavior shows less understanding than that normally encountered in dumb animals (cf. Jer 8.7). **1.4–9** Direct address to Israel underscoring the folly of its wicked behavior. **1.4** *Ah,* sometimes translated *Ho* (55.1), a simple exclamation to get the attention of those being addressed (5.8, 11, 18). The following words identify them as God's wicked *children* mentioned in v. 2. *Holy One of Israel,* one of Isaiah's favorite designations for God (5.19, 24; 10.20; 12.6; 17.7; 29.19; 30.11–12, 15; 31.1; 37.23). It expresses the unapproachable majesty and sanctity of this God (cf. 6.1–5), who nonetheless graciously chose Israel and lives in its midst (12.6; Ex 24.9–11). **1.5–6** To treat such a holy God with contempt is utter folly. Israel has already been disciplined so harshly that it is like a person whose whole body is covered with untreated wounds yet who continues to provoke more punishment. **1.7–8** The historical reality behind Isaiah's metaphor of discipline appears to be the desolation of the land caused by one of the Assyrian invasions, probably that of Sennacherib in 701 BCE. *Zion,* another name for Jerusalem, which Sennacherib isolated and besieged. *Daughter Zion,* personification of the city as a young woman carrying an undertone of affection or sympathy. **1.9** *LORD of hosts,* another of Isaiah's choice designations for God; it occurs fifty-six times in chs. 1–39. The epithet portrays God as the king and leader of the army of heavenly beings (1 Kings 22.19) and thus underscores God's great imperial power (2 Sam 6.2; Ps 24.10; Isa 6.3). *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* were proverbial as cities utterly destroyed by God (13.19; Gen 19.24–29; Deut 29.23; Jer 49.18; 50.40; Am 4.11; Zeph 2.9). **1.10–17** God rejects ritual worship until such rituals are accompanied by a genuine change to moral behavior (cf. 29.13–14; Jer 6.20; 7.1–15; Am 5.21–24). **1.10** *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* were also

The audience address ... of your
gests that work had ...
515 BCE. The ini ... in it, ... erings of
dus has not be ...
mains very ... ills,
an attem ...
rael. In ...
pres ... me;[a]
Is ... your hand?
... courts no more;
... ing offerings is futile;
incense is an abomination to me.
New moon and sabbath and calling of
convocation—
I cannot endure solemn assemblies
with iniquity.
14 Your new moons and your appointed
festivals
my soul hates;
they have become a burden to me,
I am weary of bearing them.
15 When you stretch out your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.
16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings
from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,
17 learn to do good;
seek justice,
rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan,
plead for the widow.
18 Come now, let us argue it out,
says the LORD:

ISAIAH 1.1–10 foot even to the

though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be like snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.
19 If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land;
20 but if you refuse and rebel,
you shall be devoured by the sword;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken

The Degenerate City

21 How the faithful city
has become a whore!
She that was full of justice,
righteousness lodged in her—
but now murderers!
22 Your silver has become dross,
your wine is mixed with water.
23 Your princes are rebels
and companions of thieves.
Everyone loves a bribe
and runs after gifts.
They do not defend the orphan,
and the widow's cause does not come
before them.
24 Therefore says the Sovereign, the LORD of
hosts, the Mighty One of Israel:
Ah, I will pour out my wrath on my
enemies,
and avenge myself on my foes!
25 I will turn my hand against you;
I will smelt away your dross as with lye
and remove all your alloy.
26 And I will restore your judges as at the
first,
and your counselors as at the
beginning.

a Or *see my face*

Afterward you shall be called the city of
righteousness,
the faithful city.
27 Zion shall be redeemed by justice,
and those in her who repent, by
righteousness.
28 But rebels and sinners shall be destroyed
together,
and those who forsake the LORD shall
be consumed.
29 For you shall be ashamed of the oaks
in which you delighted;
and you shall blush for the gardens
that you have chosen.
30 For you shall be like an oak
whose leaf withers,
and like a garden without water.
31 The strong shall become like tinder,
and their work[a] like a spark;
they and their work shall burn together,
with no one to quench them.

The Future House of God

2 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw
concerning Judah and Jerusalem.
2 In days to come
the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the
mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.
3 Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of
the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from
Jerusalem.
4 He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into
plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against
nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

Judgment Pronounced on Arrogance

5 O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!
6 For you have forsaken the ways of[b] your
people,
O house of Jacob.
Indeed they are full of diviners[c] from the
east
and of soothsayers like the Philistines,
and they clasp hands with foreigners.
7 Their land is filled with silver and gold,
and there is no end to their treasures;
their land is filled with horses,
and there is no end to their chariots.
8 Their land is filled with idols;
they bow down to the work of their
hands,
to what their own fingers have made.
9 And so people are humbled,
and everyone is brought low—
do not forgive them!

a Or *its makers* b Heb lacks *the ways of* c Gr: Heb lacks *of diviners*

proverbial as utterly wicked cities (3:9; Gen 19:1–23; Deut 32:32; Jer 23:14; Lam 4:6). **1:14** *My soul,* a Hebrew idiom meaning "I." **1:15** *Hands ... full of blood,* hands stained by murder and violent oppression. **1:17** Because of their relative powerlessness *orphans* and *widows* were two classes of people often subject to oppression in ancient Near Eastern societies. Following the Near Eastern legal tradition, Israelite law extended special concern for their protection (Ex 22:21; Deut 24:17; 27:19); and this concern is also reflected in Israel's other religious literature (Job 31:16; Ps 94:6; Jer 7:6; Zech 7:10). **1:18–20** The covenantal choice of life or death (cf. Deut 30:19–20). **1:18** *Argue,* as in a lawsuit before a judge (cf. Job 23:7). The use of *scarlet* and *crimson* as metaphors for wickedness probably arose from the association of these colors with blood (cf. 34:15); cloth of this color was used in certain sin offerings (Lev 14:4–6, 49–52; Num 19:6). **1:21–28** The once glorious city must be purged to restore it to its former honor. **1:21–23** God laments the city's corruption. *Whore.* Cf. Jer 3:6–10; Ezek 16:23; Hos 1–3. **1:24–28** God's solution is a purging judgment. **1:24** *Mighty One of Israel,* a unique Isaian variant of the more common epithet *Mighty One of Jacob* (49:26; 60:16; Gen 49:24; Ps 132:2, 5) portraying God as a warrior. **1:25** *with lye,* better "in a furnace" (cf. 48:10), since lye was not used in the smelting process. **1:26** The *judges* and *counselors* can only refer to royal officials of the Davidic era, since Jerusalem first became an Israelite city to his day (2 Sam 5:6–9). **1:27–28** Only the repentant will survive the judgment (cf. vv. 18–20; 33:14–16). **1:29–31** The prophet condemns sacred groves as pagan cult symbols (17:10–11); in the religious reform of his contemporary King Hezekiah they were destroyed (2 Kings 18:4). **1:31** *Strong* here refers to the idol (cf. Am 2:9). *Their work,* better *its makers* (see text note *a*); it refers to the human keepers of the grove. There is a wordplay in Hebrew between *its makers* and *their work* in the following line. **2:1** Second superscription. This can be for ch. 2 or chs. 2–4. **2:2–4** Elevated above all other sites as the divine abode (for this motif, cf. Pss 48:1–2; 78:68–69; 132:13; Zech 14:10); Jerusalem will one day be acknowledged by the nations as the imperial capital. Just as political suzerains in the ancient Near East arbitrated disputes among their vassals, so God as suzerain over all the nations will settle international disputes by arbitration at Jerusalem, thus bringing an end to war. This oracle also occurs in Mic 4:1–3. **2:5–22** Judgment threatened against the house of Jacob and every rival to God's majesty. **2:5–6a** These verses form a logical connection between the preceding and following oracles. *House of Jacob,* presumably the Northern Kingdom, Israel (9:8; 17:4; cf. 8:17; 10:20–21). Since the nations are going to come to God in Jerusalem, Israel, which has forsaken the ways of its people, is also invited to return and once more walk with God. Mic 4:4–5 ends the oracle differently. **2:6b–22** The sin of Jacob/Israel is illustrated (vv. 6–9) and God's judgment is announced (vv. 10–22). **2:6b** *Diviners* and *soothsayers* were regarded as pagan fortune-tellers and were not to be consulted in Israel (Deut 18:14). In par-

3 The Egyptians are human, and not God;
their horses are flesh, and not spirit.
When the LORD stretches out his hand,
the helper will stumble, and the one helped will fall,
and they will all perish together.

4 For thus the LORD said to me,
As a lion or a young lion growls over its prey,
and—when a band of shepherds is called out against it—
is not terrified by their shouting or daunted at their noise,
so the LORD of hosts will come down to fight upon Mount Zion and upon its hill.
5 Like birds hovering overhead, so the LORD of hosts
will protect Jerusalem;
he will protect and deliver it,
he will spare and rescue it.

6 Turn back to him whom you[a] have deeply betrayed, O people of Israel. 7 For on that day all of you shall throw away your idols of silver and idols of gold, which your hands have sinfully made for you.
8 "Then the Assyrian shall fall by a sword,
not of mortals;
and a sword, not of humans, shall devour him;
he shall flee from the sword,
and his young men shall be put to forced labor.
9 His rock shall pass away in terror,
and his officers desert the standard in panic,"
says the LORD, whose fire is in Zion,
and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

Government with Justice Predicted

32 See, a king will reign in righteousness,
and princes will rule with justice.
2 Each will be like a hiding place from the wind,
a covert from the tempest,
like streams of water in a dry place,
like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.
3 Then the eyes of those who have sight will not be closed,
and the ears of those who have hearing will listen.
4 The minds of the rash will have good judgment,
and the tongues of stammerers will speak readily and distinctly.
5 A fool will no longer be called noble,
nor a villain said to be honorable.
6 For fools speak folly,
and their minds plot iniquity:
to practice ungodliness,
to utter error concerning the LORD,
to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied,
and to deprive the thirsty of drink.
7 The villainies of villains are evil;
they devise wicked devices
to ruin the poor with lying words,
even when the plea of the needy is right.
8 But those who are noble plan noble things,
and by noble things they stand.

Complacent Women Warned of Disaster

9 Rise up, you women who are at ease, hear my voice;
you complacent daughters, listen to my speech.
10 In little more than a year
you will shudder, you complacent ones;
for the vintage will fail,
the fruit harvest will not come.
11 Tremble, you women who are at ease,
shudder, you complacent ones;

a Heb *they*

31.1–3 Cf. 30.1–17; Jer. 17.5–8. **31.4–9** The mixed imagery of an attacking lion (5.29) and protecting birds (Deut 32.11) suggests God's siege of Jerusalem followed by his deliverance of the city (see 29.1–8). **31.4** Cf. Jer 25.30, 34–38. **31.6–7** A call to repentance originally addressed to the Northern Kingdom (cf. 2.20; 17.7–8). **31.8–9** God will destroy Assyria; the Lord dwells in Jerusalem like a *fire* or a *furnace*, ready to refine his own people or consume his enemies (see 1.25; 30.27–33; 33.14). **32.1–8** In the future the rulers, the ideal king (9.1–7; 11.1–9) and his princes (cf. 1.26), will be marked by righteousness and justice. **32.2** Unlike the former officials who oppressed the people (1.23; 3.14–15), these rulers, like God, will offer relief (cf. 25.4–5; 28.12). **32.3** A reversal of the judgment in 6.9–10. **32.5–8** In those days *fools* and *villains* will be called by their right names (cf. 5.20). **32.9–14** Cf. 3.16–4.1. **32.10** The failure of the vintage will end the

strip, and make yourselves bare,
and put sackcloth on your loins.
12 Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields,
for the fruitful vine,
13 for the soil of my people
growing up in thorns and briers;
yes, for all the joyous houses
in the jubilant city.
14 For the palace will be forsaken,
the populous city deserted;
the hill and the watchtower
will become dens forever,
the joy of wild asses,
a pasture for flocks;
15 until a spirit from on high is poured out on us,
and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field,
and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.

The Peace of God's Reign

16 Then justice will dwell in the wilderness,
and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.
17 The effect of righteousness will be peace,
and the result of righteousness,
quietness and trust forever.
18 My people will abide in a peaceful habitation,
in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.
19 The forest will disappear completely,[a]
and the city will be utterly laid low.
20 Happy will you be who sow beside every stream,
who let the ox and the donkey range freely.

A Prophecy of Deliverance from Foes

33 Ah, you destroyer,
who yourself have not been destroyed;
you treacherous one,
with whom no one has dealt treacherously!
When you have ceased to destroy,
you will be destroyed;
and when you have stopped dealing treacherously,
you will be dealt with treacherously.
2 O LORD, be gracious to us; we wait for you.
Be our arm every morning,
our salvation in the time of trouble.
3 At the sound of tumult, peoples fled;
before your majesty, nations scattered.
4 Spoil was gathered as the caterpillar gathers;
as locusts leap, they leaped[b] upon it.
5 The LORD is exalted, he dwells on high;
he filled Zion with justice and righteousness;
6 he will be the stability of your times,
abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge;
the fear of the LORD is Zion's treasure.[c]
7 Listen! the valiant[b] cry in the streets;
the envoys of peace weep bitterly.
8 The highways are deserted,
travelers have quit the road.
The treaty is broken,
its oaths[d] are despised,
its obligation[e] is disregarded.
9 The land mourns and languishes;
Lebanon is confounded and withers away;
Sharon is like a desert;

a Cn: Heb *And it will hail when the forest comes down*
b Meaning of Heb uncertain c Heb *his treasure*; meaning of Heb uncertain d Q Ms: MT *cities* e Or *everyone*

former leisurely life of feasting (5.10–12). **32.11–12** Typical mourning rites (Jer 4.8). **32.15–20** The desolation of judgment will only be ended when the pouring out of God's spirit brings justice and righteousness to the people so that they live in security (see 11.2–9).

33.1–24 An extended prophetic liturgy that includes a communal prayer (vv. 2–9), oracles promising deliverance from the Assyrian oppressor (vv. 1, 10–12), and a call to righteous living in God's presence (vv. 13–16). **33.1** Warning to the treacherous oppressor that his turn will come (see 10.5–12). **33.2–9** Communal lament praising God as the defender of Zion and describing the treachery of the oppressor. **33.2** *Arm*, source of strength. *Morning*, the time of God's intervention (Ps 46.5). **33.3–4** Traditional imagery from the Zion tradition (see Introduction) for God's protection of Jerusalem; see Pss 48.4–6; 76.5. **33.5–6** God's presence in Jerusalem is its *treasure*, the source of its security (Pss 46.7, 11; 48.1–3; 76.1–3). **33.7–9** The situation of need is described as one of imminent war caused by the treacherous disregard of peace initiatives and earlier treaty commitments. Sennacherib's continuation of the campaign against Jerusalem despite Hezekiah's offer of submission provides a possible historical setting (2 Kings 18.13–37).

and Bashan and Carmel shake off their
leaves.
10 "Now I will arise," says the LORD,
"now I will lift myself up;
now I will be exalted.
11 You conceive chaff, you bring forth
stubble;
your breath is a fire that will consume
you.
12 And the peoples will be as if burned to
lime,
like thorns cut down, that are burned
in the fire."
13 Hear, you who are far away, what I have
done;
and you who are near, acknowledge my
might.
14 The sinners in Zion are afraid;
trembling has seized the godless:
"Who among us can live with the
devouring fire?
Who among us can live with
everlasting flames?"
15 Those who walk righteously and speak
uprightly,
who despise the gain of oppression,
who wave away a bribe instead of
accepting it,
who stop their ears from hearing of
bloodshed
and shut their eyes from looking on
evil,
16 they will live on the heights;
their refuge will be the fortresses of
rocks;
their food will be supplied, their water
assured.

The Land of the Majestic King

17 Your eyes will see the king in his beauty;
they will behold a land that stretches
far away.
18 Your mind will muse on the terror:
"Where is the one who counted?
Where is the one who weighed the
tribute?
Where is the one who counted the
towers?"
19 No longer will you see the insolent
people,
the people of an obscure speech that
you cannot comprehend,
stammering in a language that you
cannot understand.
20 Look on Zion, the city of our appointed
festivals!
Your eyes will see Jerusalem,
a quiet habitation, an immovable tent,
whose stakes will never be pulled up,
and none of whose ropes will be
broken.
21 But there the LORD in majesty will be for
us
a place of broad rivers and streams
where no galley with oars can go,
nor stately ship can pass.
22 For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is
our ruler,
the LORD is our king; he will save us.
23 Your rigging hangs loose;
it cannot hold the mast firm in its
place,
or keep the sail spread out.
Then prey and spoil in abundance will be
divided;
even the lame will fall to plundering.
24 And no inhabitant will say, "I am sick";
the people who live there will be
forgiven their iniquity.

Judgment on the Nations

34 Draw near, O nations, to hear;
O peoples, give heed!
Let the earth hear, and all that fills it;

33:10–12 Oracular response in which God threatens to arise and burn the enemy like *thorns* (see 10:16–17; 30:27–33). **33:13–16** In response to this mighty display of God's power before the nations, the sinners among his own people are terrified, for only the righteous can live in the presence of such a God (see Pss 15; 24:3–5). **33:17–24** In that golden future the righteous will rejoice in the glory of their king and in the security of Jerusalem. **33:18–20** In that day the former terror will seem but a dream (29:7–8); in place of enemy officers speaking an incomprehensible language (28:11–13), it will be Judah itself who counts Jerusalem's towers in thankful admiration (Ps 48:12–14). **33:21–23** This portrayal of Jerusalem makes use of Canaanite mythological motifs about the abode of the gods. Jerusalem will be well watered (Ezek 47:1–12), but not exposed to attack by sea, for the divine king will smash all such hostile ships (Ps 48:12).

34:1–17 This is probably a postexilic oracle from the same period as chs. 56–66. For the prominence

the world, and all that comes from it.
2 For the LORD is enraged against all the
nations,
and furious against all their hordes;
he has doomed them, has given them
over for slaughter.
3 Their slain shall be cast out,
and the stench of their corpses shall
rise;
the mountains shall flow with their
blood.
4 All the host of heaven shall rot away,
and the skies roll up like a scroll.
All their host shall wither
like a leaf withering on a vine,
or fruit withering on a fig tree.
5 When my sword has drunk its fill in the
heavens,
lo, it will descend upon Edom,
upon the people I have doomed to
judgment.
6 The LORD has a sword; it is sated with
blood,
it is gorged with fat,
with the blood of lambs and goats,
with the fat of the kidneys of rams.
For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah,
a great slaughter in the land of Edom.
7 Wild oxen shall fall with them,
and young steers with the mighty bulls.
Their land shall be soaked with blood,
and their soil made rich with fat.
8 For the LORD has a day of vengeance,
a year of vindication by Zion's cause.
9 And the streams of Edom[b] shall be
turned into pitch,
and her soil into sulfur;
her land shall become burning pitch.
10 Night and day it shall not be quenched;
its smoke shall go up forever.
From generation to generation it shall lie
waste;
no one shall pass through it forever
and ever.
11 But the hawk[c] and the hedgehog[c] shall
possess it;
the owl and the raven shall live in it.
He shall stretch the line of confusion over
it,
and the plummet of chaos over[d] its
nobles.
12 They shall name it No Kingdom There,
and all its princes shall be nothing.
13 Thorns shall grow over its strongholds,
nettles and thistles in its fortresses.
It shall be the haunt of jackals,
an abode for ostriches.
14 Wildcats shall meet with hyenas,
goat-demons shall call to each other;
there too Lilith shall repose,
and find a place to rest.
15 There shall the owl nest
and lay and hatch and brood in its
shadow;
there too the buzzards shall gather,
each one with its mate.
16 Seek and read from the book of the LORD:
Not one of these shall be missing;
none shall be without its mate.
For the mouth of the LORD has
commanded,
and his spirit has gathered them.
17 He has cast the lot for them,
his hand has portioned it out to them
with the line;

a Or *of recompense by Zion's defender* b Heb *her streams*
c Identification uncertain d Heb lacks *over*

given to Edom in this judgment; cf. esp. 63:1. **34:4** *Host of heaven*, the moon, stars, and planets worshiped by other nations and symbolizing the spiritual powers that lay behind their human governments (see 24:21). **34:5** *My sword*, the sword of the Lord (see Ezek 21:3–11). The judgment on *Edom* simply illustrates the destruction that will befall all the nations (Ob 15–16). **34:6** *Sacrifice*. Cf. Jer 46:10; Ezek 39:17–20. *Bozrah*, an important Edomite city (63:1). **34:8** *A day of vengeance, a year of vindication*, time for God to save Zion and to punish the nations for their treatment of it (61:2; 63:4). **34:9–10** Edom, like Babylon (13:19–22), will share the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24–28). **34:11–15** Edom's ruins will be overgrown and inhabited by wild creatures and demons. **34:11** *Line* and *plummet* were aids used by builders to ensure straight horizontal and vertical lines, but they were also used to decide if a building needed to be torn down (28:16–17; Am 7:7–9). **34:12** *No Kingdom There*, a mocking name given to the Edomite ruins. **34:14** *Goat-demons, Lilith*, two varieties of demons thought to inhabit abandoned ruins. **34:16** *Book of the LORD*, perhaps a reference to an earlier scroll containing the similar judgment against Babylon (13:19–22). **34:17** As the Israelites were assigned their inheritance in the land of Canaan by *lot* (Josh 14:1–2), these wild creatures have been assigned the ruins of Babylon as their allotted inheritance.

they shall possess it forever,
from generation to generation they
shall live in it.

The Return of the Redeemed to Zion

35 The wilderness and the dry land shall
be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus 2 it shall blossom
abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing to it,
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.

3 Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
"Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you."

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be
opened;
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
6 then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing
for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the
wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
7 the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a
swamp,[a]
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
9 No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up
on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall
return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Sennacherib Threatens Jerusalem

36 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. 2 The king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. He stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field. 3 And there came out to him Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder.

4 The Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah: Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you base this confidence of yours? 5 Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? On whom do you now rely, that you have rebelled against me?

a Cn: Heb *in the haunt of jackals is her resting place* *b* Or *pass it by* *c* Cn: Heb *for them*

35.1–10 This oracle originally belonged to the exilic collection in chs. 40–55. **35.1–2** The wilderness will bloom (41.18–19; 51.3), and all shall see the *glory of the LORD* (40.5). **35.3–4** An unnamed group, perhaps the angelic members of God's divine council (cf. 40.1–2), is commissioned to strengthen the disheartened with the good news that God is coming to save them (cf. 40.9–10; 41.10, 13–14; 43.1, 5; 44.2; 51.7; 54.4). **35.5–6a** The spiritual disabilities of God's people (see 6.9–10; 29.9–10; 32.3; 42.18–20) will be corrected. **35.6b–7** Cf. 41.18–19. **35.8** There will be a *highway* through the wilderness that no one can miss (30.20–21; 40.3–4; 42.16). **35.9** Cf. 11.6–9. **35.10** See 51.11.

36.1–39.8 Historical appendix. Apart from 38.9–20, this material seems to have been inserted from 2 Kings 18.13; 18.17–20.19. **36.1–22** Sennacherib's campaign against Jerusalem. **36.1** *Fourteenth year of King Hezekiah.* According to his annals, Sennacherib besieged Judah in 701 BCE during the course of the third campaign; hence Hezekiah began his reign in 715; two other passages date the beginning of Hezekiah's reign to 729 based on a synchronism with the Israelite king Hoshea (2 Kings 18.1, 9), but that synchronism is probably artificial and certainly less reliable than the synchronism with the Assyrian king. *All the fortified cities,* forty-six according to the Assyrian account. **36.2** *Rabshakeh,* "chief steward," Assyrian title for a high official. *Lachish,* a major Judean fortress-city lying southwest of Jerusalem midway between Jerusalem and Gaza; Sennacherib's siege of Lachish is graphically portrayed on a bas-relief from Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh. **36.3** *Eliakim, Shebna,*

See, you are relying on Egypt, that broken
reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of
anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king
of Egypt to all who rely on him. 7 But if you say
to me, 'We rely on the LORD our God,' is it not
he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has
removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem,
'You shall worship before this altar'? 8 Come
now, make a wager with my master the king of
Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if
you are able on your part to set riders on
them. 9 How then can you repulse a single cap-
tain among the least of my master's servants,
when you rely on Egypt for chariots and for
horsemen? 10 Moreover, is it without the LORD
that I have come up against this land to de-
stroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against
this land, and destroy it."

11 Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to
the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants
in Aramaic, for we understand it; do not speak
to us in the language of Judah within the hear-
ing of the people who are on the wall." 12 But
the Rabshakeh said, "Has my master sent me
to speak these words to your master and to
you, and not to the people sitting on the wall,
who are doomed with you to eat their own
dung and drink their own urine?"

13 Then the Rabshakeh stood and called
out in a loud voice in the language of Judah,
"Hear the words of the great king, the king of
Assyria! 14 Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hez-
ekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to de-
liver you. 15 Do not let Hezekiah make you rely
on the LORD by saying, The LORD will surely
deliver us; this city will not be given into the
hand of the king of Assyria.' 16 Do not listen to
Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria:
Make your peace with me and come out to
me; then every one of you will eat from your
own vine and your own fig tree and drink
water from your own cistern, 17 until I come
and take you away to a land like your own
land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread
and vineyards. 18 Do not let Hezekiah mislead
you by saying, The LORD will save us. Has any
of the gods of the nations saved their land out
of the hand of the king of Assyria? 19 Where
are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are
the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered
Samaria out of my hand? 20 Who among all the
gods of these countries have saved their coun-
tries out of my hand, that the LORD should
save Jerusalem out of my hand?'"

21 But they were silent and answered him
not a word, for the king's command was, "Do
not answer him." 22 Then Eliakim son of Hil-
kiah, who was in charge of the palace, and
Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph,
the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their
clothes torn, and told him the words of the
Rabshakeh.

Hezekiah Consults Isaiah

37 When King Hezekiah heard it, he tore
his clothes, covered himself with sack-
cloth, and went into the house of the LORD.
2 And he sent Eliakim, who was in charge of
the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and the
senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the
prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. 3 They said to
him, "Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of
distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children
have come to the birth, and there is no
strength to bring them forth. 4 It may be that
the LORD your God heard the words of the
Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of As-
syria has sent to mock the living God, and will
rebuke the words that the LORD your God has
heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the
remnant that is left."

5 When the servants of King Hezekiah
came to Isaiah, 6 Isaiah said to them, "Say to
your master, Thus says the LORD: Do not be

See 22.15–25. **36.6** Cf. 31.1–3. **36.7** Sennacherib misconstrues the character of Hezekiah's religious reform (2 Kings 18.3–6; 2 Chr 29.3–31.21); for a similar Assyrian misunderstanding of the religious situation in Judah, see 10.10–11. **36.9** Cf. 10.8. **36.10** This is typical Assyrian propaganda. **36.11** *Aramaic* was the diplomatic language of the period; the *language of Judah* was Hebrew. The average Judean did not understand Aramaic. **36.12** Horrible conditions resulting from a prolonged siege. **36.13–20** A propaganda speech aimed at the rank and file of Jerusalem's defenders. **36.19** *Hamath, Arpad, Samaria.* See note on 10.9. *Sepharvaim* ("Sibraim," Ezek 47.16), a city located between Damascus and Hamath.

37.1–35 From 2 Kings 19; also cf. 2 Chr 32.16–23. **37.1–7** Hezekiah's first consultation with Isaiah. **37.1** *Tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth,* signs of mourning. **37.2** Delegations sent from the king to consult a prophet were normal in such circumstances (2 Kings 22.11–14; Jer 37.3). **37.5–7** Isaiah reassures Hezekiah. *Rumor,* report of problems back in Assyria. *Fall by the sword.* Sennacherib was murdered by his own sons in Assyria, but he was not killed until 681 BCE, twenty years after his third campaign. This

MICAH

The Prophet

VERY LITTLE IS KNOWN about Micah, whose name, which means "Who is like the LORD?" was common in ancient Israel. The prophet is distinguished from his namesakes by being identified with his hometown Moresheth, a pastoral village that was most likely a military and administrative outpost of Jerusalem. Together with Amos, Isaiah, and Hosea, Micah was one of Israel's four great eighth-century BCE prophets. His rural roots in the Southern Kingdom, Judah, enabled him to understand how the overbearing policies of the political, social, and religious leaders of his time affected the peasant class. A prophet more of the marketplace and town square than the temple or its sanctuary, Micah addressed injustice with passion and poetic eloquence.

Historical Situation

THE SUPERSCRIPTION (1.1) SUGGESTS that Micah prophesied during the reigns of three Judahite kings: Jotham (742–735), Ahaz (735–715), and Hezekiah (715–687/6 BCE). More precisely, Micah's prophetic career probably spanned the last quarter of the eighth century during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah.

A vigorous ruler, Hezekiah initiated several religious reforms. He took many precautions to safeguard Judah against the threat of an Assyrian invasion, including forming a coalition with Phoenicia and Philistia against Sennacherib, Assyria's king, the successor of Sargon II. Under Hezekiah, Judah experienced an economic revolution. Wealth, invested in the land, led to the growth of vast estates and the collapse of small holdings. Wealthy landowners thrived at the expense of small peasant farmers. The shift from a bartering to a monetary, mercantile economy increased the gap between the rich and the poor. Furthermore, many priests and prophets viewed their ministry as a business rather than a vocation and acted accordingly. Thus, Micah preached during a time when Judah was experiencing radical internal change while living under the threat of a foreign military invasion.

International Setting

IN 732 ASSYRIAN ARMIES under Tiglath-pileser III conquered Damascus along with part of Israel, and in 722 they besieged Samaria, Israel's capital. The Philistine city Ashdod fell in 711. Under Ahaz, Judah became a vassal state of the Assyrian Empire. Under Hezekiah, Judah entered into a coalition with Phoenicia and Philistia (Ashkelon and Ekron) against Sennacherib. When Sennacherib attacked the Southern Kingdom in 701, forty-six fortified towns fell. Although Jerusalem was left unharmed, Judah remained a dominated land and a captive people.

Structure

THE BOOK OF MICAH IS, for the most part, well preserved. Scholars generally accept chs. 1–3, apart from 2.12–13, as authentic. The remainder of the book appears to be a compilation of later additions, though 6.1–7.6 may also be authentic. Scholars are divided over the general structure of the book, but the proclamations form an overarching thematic scheme: judgment (1.1–2.11), salvation (2.12–13), judgment (3.1–12), salvation (4.1–5.15), judgment (6.1–16), lament (7.1–7), and hope and confidence (7.8–20). The historical circumstances of Micah's proclamations invite further study.

The Message

MICAH UNDERSTOOD HIS TASK to be a preacher of truth—to expose injustice and inequity, to offer a word of hope and salvation, and to make known a vision of a new and transformed way of life for his community and his world. Deeply concerned with ethical issues, Micah railed against the political and religious leaders of his day because they had abandoned their divinely ordained responsibility of exercising and maintaining justice throughout the land. The common good was being usurped by personal self-interest on the part of Judean law courts, large landowners, and merchants. Micah's biting proclamations made clear God's disdain for apostasy, idolatry, hypocrisy, and disregard for Torah. He condemned the break in covenant relationship that led to grave injustices and much suffering. Micah warned leaders about their self-reliant attitudes and smug spiritual pride. He foresaw the Assyrian invasion; he made known the devastation that an empire greater than Israel and Judah would bring on the community. His words were not heeded, and the inevitable invasion did occur, leaving many cities in ruins.

Doom, however, was not Micah's overriding message. In the midst of a long judgment speech (chs. 1–3) is a word of hope (2.12–13); this theme continues throughout chs. 4–5 and 6–7. The book ends with an expression of confidence in God, who is merciful and who will exercise justice for the sake of the salvation of all peoples. Micah makes known to his people, and to later readers of the text, that God is indeed a God of righteousness whose compassion outweighs justice and whose love for all remains steadfast. [PHILIP J. KING, revised by CAROL J. DEMPSEY]

"Surely the LORD is with us!
No harm shall come upon us."
12 Therefore because of you
Zion shall be plowed as a field;
Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
and the mountain of the house a
wooded height.

Peace and Security through Obedience

4 In days to come
the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the
mountains,
and shall be raised up above the hills.
Peoples shall stream to it,
2 and many nations shall come and say:
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of
the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from
Jerusalem.
3 He shall judge between many peoples,
and shall arbitrate between strong
nations far away;
they shall beat their swords into
plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against
nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;
4 but they shall all sit under their own vines
and under their own fig trees,
and no one shall make them afraid;
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has
spoken.

5 For all the peoples walk
each in the name of its god,
but we will walk in the name of the LORD
our God
forever and ever.

Restoration Promised after Exile

6 In that day, says the LORD,
I will assemble the lame
and gather those who have been driven
away,
and those whom I have afflicted.
7 The lame I will make the remnant,
and those who were cast off, a strong
nation;
and the LORD will reign over them in
Mount Zion
now and forevermore.
8 And you, O tower of the flock,
hill of daughter Zion,
to you it shall come,
the former dominion shall come,
the sovereignty of daughter Jerusalem.

9 Now why do you cry aloud?
Is there no king in you?

smug confidence. **3.12** The severest of all judgments. What is most precious to God is about to be destroyed; what happened to Samaria (1.6) will also happen to Jerusalem. This stunning announcement is the one least expected by the political and religious leaders, who had put their confidence in the Zion tradition with its message of the inviolability of Jerusalem. Here Micah shatters the leaders' religious pride.

4.1–5 A prophetic vision that promises peace for the future, closely paralleled in Isa 2.2–4, but in marked contrast to Mic 3.12. Scholars disagree on the relationship between these texts, and some have posited dependence on a common source. **4.1** *The mountain of the LORD's house,* Mount Zion. **4.2** Three times each year on the major feasts (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles) pilgrims went up to Jerusalem (Ps 122.1, 4). *Instruction* (Hebrew *torah*), in the sense of divine teachings. **4.3** Micah describes a vision of world peace that God as just ruler and judge will bring about in a nonviolent way through arbitration. This vision would fulfill one of the sovereign's main responsibilities, namely, to bring peace and tranquility to all nations (1 Kings 5.4; Isa 9.7; 11.1–9; Jer 23.5–6; 33.15–16). **4.4** Peace among nations leads to individual peace, symbolized by an agrarian image of security and stability. *Vines* and *fig trees* represent long-term stability, peace, and prosperity. **4.5** *We,* the congregation in Judah. **4.6–8** A divine promise. God will act positively on behalf of the remnant, and both sovereignty and noble dignity will be restored to Jerusalem. **4.7** The dispersed will be brought back to Jerusalem, where the Lord will exercise dominion on their behalf from the Temple Mount. **4.8** *Tower of the flock,* translation of the Hebrew place-name Migdal Eder, situated between Bethlehem and Hebron, where Jacob camped after burying Rachel (Gen 35.21). Towers were sometimes erected to protect pastures. Here *tower of the flock* designates Mount Zion. *Hill* (Hebrew *ophel*) refers to the fortified upper sector of capital cities where the palace and other royal buildings stood. In Jerusalem, Ophel designated the area lying between the Temple Mount and the City of David on the southeast hill. **4.9–10** Prophetic announcement of salvation. God's suffering people will be consoled and redeemed from their suffering. The references to childbirth suggest new life. At this juncture the people are in a state of transition as they move from devastation to reprieve to restoration. **4.10–11** *Like a woman in labor,* an image that, although not fully developed in these verses, is suggestive of the birth pangs necessary for new life. The simile conveys a message of hope, but one not without its dangers. **4.11–13** Prophetic announcement of salvation. The nations are coming to wage war against Zion, but Zion, according to God's divine plan, will prevail against them. **4.13** *Iron, bronze,* symbols of strength and hardness, respectively (cf. Jer 1.18). *Gain,* legitimate plunder as well as ill-gotten treasures, including bribes. *Wealth,* legitimate gain.

5.1–6 Prophetic announcement of salvation. The passage strengthens the hope of the people as they anticipate a new royal messiah, the ideal leader, promised by the prophet, who will usher in a time of strength, justice, and peace. **5.1** *They strike . . . upon the cheek,* an act of humiliation expressing contempt for the king. It may refer to King Hezekiah, who in 701 BCE was cowed by Sennacherib. **5.2** *Bethlehem,* a small town five miles south of Jerusalem. David, a native of Bethlehem, was anointed there by Samuel (1 Sam 16.1–13). *Ephrathah* is identified with Bethlehem. The relationship between Bethlehem and Ephrathah is unclear. Ephrathah may have been the ancient name of Bethlehem, or it may have been absorbed into Bethlehem. This undistinguished town was paradoxically to be the source of salvation. *Me,* God. *Whose origin . . . ancient days,* the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7). **5.4** A description, comparable to that in the royal psalms (e.g., Pss 2; 72), of the ideal shepherd-king, who will bring security and peace. **5.5–6** A picture of victory over the unrelenting Assyrians to be accomplished by Israel's own leaders. **5.5** *Seven . . . eight,* a numerical progression, as in Am 1.3, signifying an indefinite number. The reference is to an alliance of rulers defeating the Assyrians. **5.6** *Land of Nimrod,* a poetic term for Assyria, is in parallel with *land of Assyria.*

Has your counselor perished,
that pangs have seized you like a
woman in labor?
10 Writhe and groan,[a] O daughter Zion,
like a woman in labor;
for now you shall go forth from the city
and camp in the open country;
you shall go to Babylon.
There you shall be rescued,
there the LORD will redeem you
from the hands of your enemies.

11 Now many nations
are assembled against you,
saying, "Let her be profaned,
and let our eyes gaze upon Zion."
12 But they do not know
the thoughts of the LORD;
they do not understand his plan,
that he has gathered them as sheaves to
the threshing floor.
13 Arise and thresh,
O daughter Zion,
for I will make your horn iron
and your hoofs bronze;
you shall beat in pieces many peoples,
and shall[b] devote their gain to the
LORD,
their wealth to the Lord of the whole
earth.

5 [c]Now you are walled around with a wall;[d]
siege is laid against us;
with a rod they strike the ruler of Israel
upon the cheek.

The Ruler from Bethlehem

2 [e]But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.
3 Therefore he shall give them up until the
time
when she who is in labor has brought
forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.
4 And he shall stand and feed his flock in
the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD
his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he
shall be great
to the ends of the earth;
5 and he shall be the one of peace.

If the Assyrians come into our land
and tread upon our soil,[f]
we will raise against them seven shepherds
and eight installed as rulers.
6 They shall rule the land of Assyria with
the sword,
and the land of Nimrod with the
drawn sword;[g]

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a Meaning of Heb uncertain *b* Gk Syr Tg: Heb *and I will* *c* Ch 4.14 in Heb *d* Cn Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain *e* Ch 5.1 in Heb *f* Gk: Heb *in our palaces* *g* Cn: Heb *in its entrances*