THEOLOGY OF PENTATEUCH

ALPHA INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE
Thalassery, Kerala, India - 670 101
Ph: 0490 2960027
Web: www.alphathalassery.org, Email: alphits@gmail.com

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Contents

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01

Introduction

Introduction

The first five books of the Bible is known as Pentateuch. The name 'Pentateuch' means literally 'five scrolls', derived from Greek *pente* and *teuchos*, which can mean 'scroll.' It has been used since at least early Christian times for the first five books of the OT, Genesis to Deuteronomy. The Jewish name for these books was usually and still is 'the law': Hebrew *Tôrâ*, Greek *nomos* or *nomothesia* (the latter is literally 'legislation'), and it is this name which appears in the NT: e.g. Lk 24:11. 'What is written in the law, the prophets and the psalms', where we meet the threefold subdivision of the Hebrew canon that continues to be used, with the substitution of 'writings' for 'psalms' as the third section. The term contains the the five books of the Law : *Bereshit* (Genesis), *Shemot* (Exodus), *Wayiqra* (Leviticus), *Bemidbar* (Numbers), and *Debarim* (Deuteronomy). Ancient Jewish tradition attributed the authorship of the Pentateuch (with the exception of the last eight verses describing Moses' death) to Moses himself.

1. Pentateuch, Hexateuch, Tetrateuch or Unateuch?

Instead of Pentateuch many scholars are speaking about *hexateuch*, *tetrateuch* and *unateuch*:**Hexateuch** (hex=six): This was a proposal promoted by Gerhard von Rad during the first half of the 20th century. Looking at the cohesion and shared features between Deuteronomy and Joshua through the first chapter of Judges, von Rad saw a unity between the first six books of the Old Testament. As a result, he talked about a Hexateuch to identify the unity between these six books. He saw Deuteronomy as the climax and heart of the Pentateuch with Joshua as part of the ongoing narrative of the exodus-conquest complex. Judges, on the other hand, belonged to a later body of material with a different purpose, and so was not included in the confessional schema of *Heilsgeschichte*. Tetrateuch (tetra=four): Martin Noth saw a much closer relationship between Deuteronomy and the rest of the historical books that followed. He proposed that the material in Joshua through 2 Kings was basically a unity with Deuteronomy and its theme of covenant serving as a theological introduction to that material. By placing Deuteronomy as the introduction to the Former Prophets this left the four books of Genesis-Numbers, a Tetrateuch seen as much more complex than Noth envisioned.

Unateuch (una=one): This is not really so much a single scholarly position as it is descriptive of a variety of ways of talking about this material On the one hand, some biblical scholars see some kind of overall cohesion or purposeful shaping of the material. This is not quite the traditional "Moses wrote it" approach. Yet, in spite of recognizing various strands of tradition interwoven in the material or other complexities, some biblical scholars propose a larger cohesion to the material (On the other hand, there are some who see the book of Deuteronomy as standing alone. That is, they emphasize the uniqueness of Deuteronomy and do not see any necessary connection either in terms of sources or of larger theological relationship based on redaction between Deuteronomy and surrounding material.

Pentateuch (penta=five): There are still those who want to retain the traditional division of the first five books as either "law" or *torah*, and see the following books as dealing with Israel's history. This

would include both Jews and Christians who see the importance of the traditional division in the climax of the covenant passages in Deuteronomy as summarizing the Pentateuch, and the following material simply recounting the historical sequence of Israel's settlement in the land.

In summary, these various terms are simply designations for how scholars see the relationship, literary or theological, between the various books of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets. It is really not a matter of having to decide which is true. All of them have their student of Scripture to look beyond rigid categories that might be imposed by traditional designations.

Patristic Attestations

The earlier references of the Greek name *pentateuchos*, implying a division of the law into five parts are found in the following writings:

* The letter to Flora by the Valentinian Ptolemy (A.D. 150-75, cf. St. Epiphanius, "Haer.", XXXIII, iv; P.G., XLI, 560).
* Origen (Comment. in Ev. Jo., t. II; P.G., XIV, 192; cf. P.G., XIII, 444), St. Athanasius (Ep. ad Marcellin., 5; P.G., XXVII, 12),
* St. Epiphanius (De mensur et ponderib., 4, 6; P.G., XLIII, 244).
* Tertullian uses the masculine form *Pentateuchus* (Adv. Marcion., I, 10; P.L., II, 257),
* St. Isidore of Seville prefers the neuter *Pentateuchum* (Etym., VI, ii, 1, 2; P.L., LXXXII, 230).

2. Mosaic Authorship

It is usually accepted that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch. According to the trend of both Old and New Testament, and according to Jewish and Christian theology, the work of the great lawgiver Moses is the origin of the history of Israel and the basis of its development down to the time of Jesus Christ; but modern Biblical criticism sees in all this only the result, or the precipitate, of a purely natural historical development. However,the evidences from the scripture to prove the Mosaic authorship of Pentateuch can be summarized in the following points:

1. There are evidences in the text itself regarding Moses writing down the events as told by God: (a) After Israel's victory over the Amalecites near Raphidim, the Lord said to Moses (Ex 17:14): "Write this for a memorial in a book." Even if we suppose that the Massoretic pointing gives the original text, we can hardly prove that the book referred to is the Pentateuch, though this is highly probable. (b) Again, Ex 24:4: "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord." The context does not allow us to understand these words in an indefinite manner, but as referring to the words of the Lord immediately preceding or to the so-called "Book of the Covenant" (Ex 20-23). (c) Ex 34:27: "And the Lord said to Moses: Write thee these words by which I have made a covenant both with thee and with Israel." The next verse adds: "and he wrote upon the tables the ten words of the covenant." (d) Nu 33:1-2: "These are the mansions of the children of Israel, who went out of Egypt by their troops under the conduct of Moses and Aaron, which Moses wrote down according to the places of their encamping." (e) There are certain indications in Deuteronomy which point to the literary activity of Moses: Dt 1:5: "And Moses began to expound the law and to say"; even if the "law" in this text refer to the whole of the Pentateuchal legislation, which is not very probable, it shows only that Moses promulgated the whole law, but not that he necessarily wrote it. For similar accounts see 4:1-40; 17;18-9; 28:58; 29:20-21; 32:46-47 etc.), What we can infer from the Pentateuchal accounts is that even though some parts of the books are written by Moses, there is no sufficient proof to conclude that Moses had written the entire Pentateuch.

2. The other OT books refers to Pentateuch as the law of Moses (Josh 1:7-8; 8:31; 22:5; 23:6; Jdg 11:12-28; 15:8-10; 18:31; 20:6-8. The Books of Kings repeatedly speak of the law of Moses (1 Kings 2:3; 10:31; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; 23:2). The Books of Chronicles are referring not only to the genealogies (1 Chronicles 1-9) and the descriptions of worship traced after the data and laws of the Pentateuch, but the sacred writer expressly points out their conformity with what is written in the law of the Lord (1 Chr 16:40), in the law of Moses (2 Chronicles 23:18; 31:3), thus identifying the law of

the Lord with that written by Moses (cf. 2 Chronicles 25:4). To the witness of the historical books we may add 2Mc 2:4; 7:6; Jdt 8:23; and from wisdom literature, Sir 24:33; 45:1-6; 45:18, and especially the Preface of Ecclus. Prophets, especially the later Prophets are referring to Pentateuch as law of Moses (Bar ii:2, 28; Dan 9:11-13; Mal 4:4).

3. Jesus as well as the apostles quoted the whole of the Pentateuch as written by Moses. If they attributed to Moses all the passages which they happen to cite, if they ascribe the Pentateuch to Moses whenever there is question of its authorship, even the most exacting critics must admit that they express their conviction that the work was indeed witten by Moses. (Mt 22:24; Mk 12:19; Lk 20:28), Jesus does not deny the Mosaic authorship, but appeals to Ex 3:6, as equally written by Moses (Mk 12:26; Mt 22:31; Lk 20:37; Acts 3:22; 2 Cor 3:15; Rom 10:5-8; 19; Rev 15:3).

4. The voice of tradition, both Jewish and Christian, is so unanimous and constant in proclaiming the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch that down to the seventeenth century it did not allow the rise of any serious doubt. In the Jewish tradition, for example, Josephus ascribes to Moses the authorship of the entire Pentateuch, (*Antiq*. IV, viii, 3-48; cf. *I Procem*., 4; *Contra Apion*., I.8). The Alexandrian philosopher Philo is convinced that the entire Pentateuch is the work of Moses (*De vita Mosis*, ll.II.III). The Babylonian Talmud also maintains the same opinion (*Baba-Bathra*, II, col. 140; *Makkoth*, fol. IIa; *Menachoth*, fol. 30a).

5. In continuation with the spirit of the NT the Mosaic authorship of Pentateuch is asserted in the Christian tradition. For example see Epistle of Barnabas (x, 1-12) ; Clement of Rome (*1 Corinthians* 41:1), St. Justin (*Apol*. I, 59; *Dialogue with Trypho* 29), Irenæus (*Cont. haer*., I.ii. 6; Hippolytus of Rome (*Comment. In Deut.*, xxxi, 9, 31, 35) etc.

But Catholic tradition does not necessarily maintain that Moses wrote every letter of the Pentateuch as it is today, and that the work has come down to us in an absolutely unchanged form. According to the Catholic view, both extreem positions such as that

denies Mosai role and that holds absolute Mosaic priority are unbalenced. What is to be noted that, we cannot exclude Mosaic influence compleetly from the formation of Pentateuch. Moses functins as the Master brain of the entire Pentateuchal traditions.Even the JEDP tradition formed from various parts of the promised land, from different schools, they depend on the same source-the Divine experience of Moses and Penteteuch formed out of the written and oral traditions transmitted through him.. Card. Bellarmine, who may be considered as a reliable exponent of Catholic tradition, expressed the opinion that Esdras had collected, readjusted, and corrected the scattered parts of the Pentateuch, and had even added the parts necessary for the completion of the Pentateuchal history (*De verbo Dei*, II, I; cf. III, iv).

Ecclesiastical decisions

In accordance with the voice of the triple argument thus far advanced for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the Biblical Commission on 27 June, 1906, answered a series of questions concerning this subject in the following way:

(1) The arguments accumulated by the critics to impugn the Mosaic authenticity of the sacred books designated by thename Pentateuch are not of such weight as to give us the right, after setting aside numerous passages of both Testaments taken collectively, the continuous consensus of the Jewish people, the constant tradition of the Church, and internal indications derived from the text itself, to maintain that these books have not Moses as their author, but are compiled from sources for the greatest part later than the Mosaic age.

(2) The Mosaic authenticity of the Pentateuch does not necessarily require such a redaction of the whole work as to render it absolutely imperative to maintain that Moses wrote all and everything with his own hand or dictated it to his secretaries; the hypothesis of those can be admitted who believe that he entrusted the composition of the work itself, conceived by him under the influence of Divine inspiration, to others, but in such a way that they were to express faithfully his own thoughts, were to write nothing

against his will, were to omit nothing; and that finally the work thus produced should be approved by the same Moses, its principal and inspired author, and published under his name.

(3) It may be granted without prejudice to the Mosaic authenticity of the Pentateuch, that Moses employed sources in the production of his work, i.e., written documents or oral traditions, from which he may have drawn a number of things in accordance with the end he had in view and under the influence of Divine inspiration, and inserted them in his work either literally or according to their sense, in an abbreviated or amplified form.

(4) The substantial Mosaic authenticity and integrity of the Pentateuch remains intact if it be granted that in the long course of centuries the work has suffered several modifications, as; post-Mosaic additions either appended by an inspired author or inserted into the text as glosses and explanations; the translation of certain words and forms out of an antiquated language into the recent form of speech; finally, wrong readings due to the fault of transcribers, which one may investigate and pass sentence on according to the laws of criticism.

The post-Mosaic additions and modifications allowed by the Biblical Commission in the Pentateuch without removing it from the range of substantial integrity and Mosaic authenticity are variously interpreted by Catholic scholars.

02

The JEDP Theory

Various solutions had been suggested by scholars to solve the previously mentioned discrepancies and narrative anomalies in the Pentateuch. In 1853, Hupfeld proposed that there are two Elohistic source documents in Genesis: chapters 1-19 by one author and chapters 20 - 50 by another. He also put great importance upon the redactor, or the one who assembled the various documents, who used editor rights during the compilation of the book of Genesis. Therefore, his arrangement of the documents was thus: First Elohist, Second Elohist, Jehovist, Deuteronomist: J, E, and D.

Later, Karl H. Graf in the 1860's and Julius Wellhausen in the 1870's said that "according to the historical and prophetical books of the Old Testament, the priestly legislation of the middle books of the Pentateuch was unknown in pre-exilic time, and that this legislation must therefore be a late development." The letter P became associated with this view.Basically they arranged the Pentateuch authorship in the following manner: "The earliest part of the Pentateuch came from

two originally independent documents, the Jahwist (850 BC) and Elohist (750 BC). From these the Jahwist compiled a narrative work (650 BC). Deuteronomy came in Josiah's time and its author incorporated this into the Jahwist's work. The priestly legislation in the Elohist document was largely the work of Ezra and is referred to as the Priestly Document. A later editor(s) revised and edited the conglomeration of documents by about 200 B.C. to form the extant Pentateuch we have today." There have been slight modifications of this list, but it is basically the same form used by those holding to the Documentary Hypothesis.

Jahwist Source (J)

Scholars estimate the date of composition as c. 950 BC not long before the split of the united kingdom of Israel into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah in 922 BC, making it the oldest source. The documentary hypothesis attributes anthropomorphic descriptions of Yaheh, personal visits from Yahweh, and use of the personal name prior to Exodus 3 to the Jahwist source. It is a misunderstanding of the documentary hypothesis to attribute all use of the personal name Yahweh to the hypothetical Jahwist source; the hypothetical Deuteronomist, Elohist, and Priestly source documents all contain numerous uses of the personal name Yahweh, but the Jahwist source document is the only one to use the personal name Yahweh prior to Exodus 3. Concerned with narratives, making up half of Genesis and half of Exodus, plus fragments of Numbers, J has a special interest in the territory of the Kingdom of Judah and individuals connected with its history. J has an eloquent style.

The Jahwist presents a theology of history, rather than timeless philosophical theology. Yahweh's character is known by his actions. The Jahwist picture of Yahweh begins with the creation of human beings and the early history of mankind in general (Genesis 2-11). The Jahwist contributions in this material do not intend to present an exhaustive history, but rather certain episodes with particular importance to later generations. These episodes explain human mortality, the need to work for a living, the existence of many languages, rivalry among brothers, and man's attempt to break through

God's limits. The family is often in view in theological contexts, and the sequence of sin-punishment-mercy appears several times.

The Jahwist picture of a theology of history continues with the call of Abraham and the subsequent history of Israel and their ancestors. The Jahwist presents the nation of Israel as Yahweh's own people, which he brought into being, protected, and settled in the land of Canaan, in fulfillment of promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Jahwist source presents a history of Israel that also illustrates themes of sin-punishment-grace, but more especially one that portrays Yahweh as a powerful deliverer and provider of his people's needs. Faith in Yahweh alone is the primary virtue. The Jahwist also emphasizes Israel's destiny to be a great nation who will rule over her neighbors and have a king from the tribe of Judah. The theology of the Jahwist extends beyond Israel and includes notice that all nations will be blessed through Abraham (or bless themselves through Abraham). Furthermore, the report of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is attributed to the Jahwist.

Elohist Source (E)

According to the documentary hypothesis, use of the generic word for deity, Elohim, rather than the more personal name, YHWH, prior to Exodus 3, and descriptions of Yahweh of a more impersonal nature (for example, speaking through dreams, prophets, and angels rather than personal appearances) indicate the Elohist source. The Elohist's narrative does not begin with a depiction of Yahweh's creation of humankind, but with the divine address to Abraham, the ancestor of Israel. Because both the Jahwist source and the Elohist source use "Yahweh" for God after Exodus 3, it is more difficult to discern Elohist from Jahwist source material from that point onward. E parallels J, often duplicating the narratives. E makes up a third of Genesis and half of Exodus, plus fragments of Numbers. E describes a human-like God initially called *Elohim*, and *Yahweh* subsequent to the incident of the burning bush, at which Elohim reveals himself as Yahweh. E focuses on the Kingdom of Israel and on the Shiloh priesthood, and has a moderately eloquent style. Scholars suggest the Elohist source was composed c. 850 BC.

The theology of the Elohist focuses on four key elements: 1) prophetic leadership, 2) the fear of God, 3) covenant, and 4) the theology of history. Prophetic leadership is emphasized by building the narrative on four key ancestors (Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses) who are presented as prophets who receive revelations from God in visions and dreams. The Elohist's concept of the fear of God goes beyond reverent awe and is the root of Abraham's obedience to the command to slay his son. Covenant is emphasized by the Elohist on a number of occasions, notably the covenant ceremony of Exodus 24, establishment of the tent of meeting, and Israel's rebellion at Sinai with worship of the golden calf which presents the Elohist's gloomy view of Israel's propensity to violate her covenant with God. The Elohist theology of history is focused on the nation of Israel and more inclined than the Jahwist to focus on the specifically religious aspects of prayer, sacrifice, and prophetic revelations. The goal of history for Israel is explicitly religious: to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Deuteronomist Source (D)

According to M. Noth, the Deuteronomist wrote in the middle of the 6th century BC with the purpose of addressing contemporaries in the Babylonian exile to show them that "their sufferings were fully deserved consequences of centuries of decline in Israel's loyalty to Yahweh." Loyalty to Yahweh was measured in terms of obedience to the Deuteronomic law. Since Israel and Judah had failed to follow that law, their histories had ended in complete destruction in accordance with the divine judgment envisaged by Deuteronomy. "But it shall come to pass, if you will not listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day, that all these curses shall come on you, and overtake you." D in the Pentateuch is restricted to the book of Deuteronomy, although it continues into the subsequent books of Joshua, Judges and Kings. It takes the form of a series of sermons about the Law, as well as recapitulating the narrative of Exodus and Numbers. Its distinctive term for God is *YHWH Eloheinu*, traditionally translated in English as "The Lord our God." Scholars estimate this

source may have been composed c. 650–621 BC, which would have been prior to the Babylonian Exile (587-539 BCE).

According to Gerhard von Rad, Noth's view of the purpose of the Deuteronomist emphasized the theme of judgment and missed the theme of Yahweh's grace in the Deuteronomistic History. The Deuteronomist reported repeated instances of Yahweh's word at work in describing previously reported oracles of Yahweh's prophets being precisely fulfilled in events described later. On the one hand, destruction of Israel and Judah was portrayed as according to the prophetic pronouncement of doom in retaliation for disobedience. On the other hand, the final destruction was restrained by Yahweh's promise to David found in Nathan's oracle in 2 Samuel 7 and reiterated throughout 1-2 Kings.

H.W. Wolff describes the purpose of the Deuteronomist in the pattern of apostasy, punishment, repentance, and deliverance common in the Deuteronomistic History. According to Wolff, the Deuteronomist's intent was to show the exiles that they were in the second stage of the pattern and therefore needed to "cry out to Yahweh in repentance." According to the pattern of Yahweh's previous dealings with Israel, the imperative for the exiles was simply to turn back to God.

Priestly Source (P)

The documentary hypothesis describes the Priestly source as using the title Elohim as the general name for God in the primeval period (Genesis 1-11). El Shaddai is the first special name for God and it is revealed to the patriarchs and reserved for that era. Yahweh is the personal name for God that is revealed to Moses and never set in the mouth of any speaker by the Priestly source prior to Moses. The Priestly source portrays God/Yahweh as the creator of the whole world, which he declared to be good, and on which he has bestowed his blessing. Humanity is created in God's image (or as God's image) implying dominion over the whole earth. P includes many lists (especially genealogies), dates, numbers and laws. Portrayals of God viewed as distant and unmerciful are ascribed to P. P partly duplicates J and E, but alters details to stress the importance of the priesthood.

P consists of about a fifth of Genesis (including its famous first chapter), substantial portions of Exodus and Numbers, and almost all of Leviticus. According to Wellhausen, P has a low level of literary style. Scholars estimate its composition c. 600-400 BC.

The Priestly source portrays Yahweh as a God who is interested in ritual. The covenant of circumcision, the dietary laws, and the emphasis on making a tabernacle according to a divinely revealed plan are all ascribed to the Priestly source. Yahweh's presence and Yahweh's blessings are described in the Priestly source not to be mediated by the king, but by the high priest mediating at the central place of worship.

The Priestly source depicts a formal structure in terms of space, time, and social structure. The spatial center of the universe is the sanctuary which is first modeled in the tabernacle and later in the temple modeled after the pattern revealed to Moses. It is at this specific location that Yahweh wanted to make himself present to his people. Yahweh has arranged the temporal order around progressive layers of Sabbaths: seven days, seven months, seven years, seven times seven years. In terms of social structure, the Priestly source portrays Yahweh as granting his presence to the particular people "who know his name." The priesthood, the ritual system, and the law represent the cosmic order in a priestly garment.

Decisions of the Pontifical Biblical Commission on JEDP Theory

Some decisions of the Biblical Commission in regards to the chief subject of this article, viz., Genesis, are as follows: The various exegetical systems which exclude the literal and historical sense of the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis are not based on solid foundation. It should not be taught that these three chapters do not contain true narrations of facts, but only fables derived from the mythologies and cosmogonies of earlier peoples, purged of the polytheistic errors and accommodated to monotheism; or allegories and symbols, with no objective reality, set forth in the guise of history to inculcate religious and philosophical truths; or, finally, legends partly historical and partly fictitious put together for instruction

and edification. In particular, doubt should not be cast on the literal and historical sense of passages which touch on the foundations of the Christian religion, as, for instance, the creation of the universe by God at the beginning of time; the special creation of man; the formation of the first woman from the first man; the unity of the human race; the original happiness, integrity, and immortality of our first parents in the state of justice; the precept given by God to man to try his obedience; the transgression of the Divine precept, at the suggestion of the Devil, under the form of a serpent; the fall of our first parents from their original state of justice; the promise of a future Redeemer.

In explaining such passages in these chapters as the Fathers and Doctors interpreted differently, one may follow and defend the opinion which meets his approval. Not every word or phrase in these chapters is always necessarily to be taken in its literal sense so that it may never have another, as when it is manifestly used metaphorically or anthropomorphically. The literal and historical meaning of some passages in these chapters presupposed, an allegorical and prophetical meaning may wisely and usefully be employed. As in writing the first chapter of Genesis the purpose of the sacred author was not to expound in a scientific manner the constitution of the universe or the complete order of creation, but rather to give to the people popular information in the ordinary language of the day, adapted to the intelligence of all, the strict propriety of scientific language is not always to be looked for in their terminology. The expression *six days* and their division may be taken in the ordinary sense of a natural day, or for a certain period of time, and exegetes may dispute about this question.

03

Theology of the Pentateuch

3.1 Divine Names Used in Pentateuch

Early critical interpreters noted that the Pentateuch has a variety of names for God. And they argued that these variations were evidences of a long evolution of Israel's faith. For instance, sometimes the Pentateuch simply uses the Hebrew term "*Elohim*" or "God." Other times, God is called "*Yahweh*" or "the Lord." The Pentateuch combines these terms with each other and with other terms as well, like "*Yahweh Elohim*" or "the Lord God," and "*Yahweh Yireh*," or "the Lord provides." God is also called "*El Elyon*" or "God Most High," and "*El Shaddai*," often translated "God Almighty.

3.2 The Three Covenants in the Pentateuch

Covenants play a prominent role in OT life—socially, politically, and religiously. In form, a *covenant* is an agreement between two people and involves promises on the part of each to the other. The concept of a covenant between God and His people is one of the central themes of the Bible. In the Biblical sense, a

covenant implies much more than a contract or a simple agreement between two parties. The meaning of the Hebrew term *berit* is more obscure. Originating from the root (barah), the word has several suggested meanings. Some associate the term with the Akkadian baru, "to bind, fetter," pointing to Ezekiel 20:37 for support: "And I shall make you pass under the rod, and I shall bring you into the bond of the covenant" A possible parallel may exist with the Hittite dynastic suzerainty treaties, in which a vassal would enter into an oath of loyalty toward the king in return for past favors and future protection. On occasion, the root is used in the sense of "food, eating," suggesting that *berît* may speak of making a mutual alliance or obligation while sharing a meal.

The word for "covenant" in the Old Testament also provides additional insight into the meaning of this important idea. It comes from a Hebrew root word that means "to cut." This explains the strange custom of two people passing through the cut bodies of slain animals after making an agreement (cf. Jer. 34:18). A ceremony such as this always accompanied the making of a covenant in the Old Testament. Sometimes those entering into a covenant shared a meal, such as when Laban and Jacob made their covenant (Gen. 31:54). Abraham and his children were commanded to be circumcised as a "sign of covenant" between them and God (Gen. 17:10-11). At Sinai, Moses sprinkled the blood of animals on the altar and upon the people who entered into covenant with God (Exo. 24:3-8). The Old Testament contains many examples of covenants between people who related to each other as equals. For example, David and Jonathan entered into a covenant because of their love for each other- this agreement bound each of them to certain responsibilities (1 Sam. 18:3). The remarkable thing is that God is holy, omniscient, and omnipotent; but He consents to enter into covenant with man, who is feeble, sinful, and flawed.

Covenant Signs: Another occasional feature was the sign of the covenant. Though similar to a pledge or gift, which was given when enacting a human covenant, the sign of a divine covenant was generally a repeatable memorial. God placed a rainbow in the sky for Noah and subsequent generations, promising that He would never again.

God commanded circumcision as a perpetual reminder to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:9-10, 13-14). Later, He instituted the Sabbath at Mt. Sinai as a sign of His covenant with Israel (Exod 31:13; Ezek 20:12, 20).

Covenant Witnesses: Frequently, covenants between individuals were said to be divinely witnessed. David's covenant with Jonathan was made "before the LORD" (1 Sam 23:18; cf. 1 Sam 20:8). Laban, when making a covenant with Jacob, repeatedly reminded his son-in-law that though "no man is with us, God is witness between you and me" (Gen 31:50; cf. v. 53).26 Calling God to witness a covenant agreement may be the reason why many covenant oaths between individuals were solemnized in the house of the LORD (e.g., 2 Kgs 11:4; 2 Chr 23:3; Jer 34:15).

Covenant Consequences: The consequences attached to the covenants, whether human or divine in origin, could be either positive or negative. Regardless of whether the covenant was motivated by friendship (as with Jonathan and David [1 Samuel 18]), suspicion (as with Laban and Jacob [Genesis 31]), or God's loving choice (as with Israel), fidelity to the covenant is its most fundamental anchor and constitutes the essence of it. Covenants were to be remembered and kept, and blessings awaited those who did. God's covenants began with blessings, with even greater blessings to follow. His covenants were "front-loaded," so to speak, with divine blessings, wholly undeserved and unmerited, and secured with promises of eternal fidelity. But they could also be rejected and broken,31 transgressed,32 and forsaken.33 And the gravity of failing to honor the stipulations could be severe. Violators of the divine covenant are promised the "curses of the covenant" (Deut 29:21) and divine "vengeance" (Lev 26:25). In the case of a covenant between individuals, walking between the pieces of the sacrifice (e.g., Gen 15:12-18) provided a visual threat of similar dismemberment should the covenant obligations go unmet- a consequence ultimately realized in Judah's capture by Babylon (Jer 34:18-20). The formula, "may God do so to me and more also" (Ruth 1:17; 1 Sam 3:17; 20:13; 2 Kgs 6:31) probably has its origin in the reference to those who consummate a covenant by walking between a divided carcass.

Covenant Conditionality: Conditionality was an integral aspect of every bilateral covenant. Failure of one of the parties to carry out the specified conditions rendered the agreement null and void. Unilateral covenants, on the other hand, wherein the LORD is the sole party responsible to carry out its obligations, are unconditional, depending totally on His faithfulness for their fulfillment.35 Scripture gives five of these covenants: the Noahic, Abrahamic, Priestly (or Levitical), Davidic, and the New. Scripture has no evidence of any obligations required of the recipients of these five covenants. It should be noted, however, that this does not deny the possible need for consequent obedience. But it does establish the fact that obedience is not a contingency for its fulfillment. Furthermore, God may bring judgment (or blessing) locally when there is disobedience or obedience (as in Genesis 12:3, "I will bless those who bless you and the one treating you lightly I will curse"). Waltke notes, "God's grant of seasonal harvest and blessing are in space and time universally irrevocable, but locally and temporarily conditional upon moral behavior or providential acts."3Though God's unilateral, one-directional covenant making may contain similarities with man's covenant-making, there are essential differences. Like man's covenants, God's covenants are in His self-interest; but God's covenants are in the best interests of man as well-an attribute that is often lacking in man's covenants.

3.2.1 God's Covenant with Noah

Noah lived at a time when the whole earth was filled with violence and corruption—yet Noah did not allow the evil standards of his day to rob him of fellowship with God. He stood out as the only one who "walked with God" (Gen. 6:9), as was also true of his great-grandfather Enoch (Gen. 5:22). "Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations" (Gen. 6:9). The Lord singled out Noah from among all his contemporaries and chose him as the man to accomplish a great work. When God saw the wickedness that prevailed in the world (Gen. 6:5), Noah is listed among the heroes of faith. "By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Heb. 11:7). Peter reminds us of how God "did

not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly" (2 Pet. 2:5). Noah preached for 120 years, apparently without any converts. At the end of that time, "when ... the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah ... eight souls were saved through water" (1 Pet. 3:20).

Lord promised Noah and his descendants that He would never destroy the world again with a universal flood (Gen. 9:15). The Lord made an everlasting covenant with Noah and his descendants, establishing the rainbow as the sign of His promise (Gen. 9:1-17). Another part of the covenant involved the sanctity of human life, i.e., that "whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man" (Gen. 9:6). Every time we see a rainbow today we are reminded of that agreement- this covenant has not been done away with. As long as God still sends rainbows after a storm, capital punishment will still be a part of God's law for the human race.

The Sign: As a sign of the covenant, God placed a rainbow in the cloud (Gen 9:13, 14, 16, 17). As with other covenant signs, this too was a repeatable evidence (cf. discussion above) of God's promise to Noah. Strikingly, the sign itself incorporated an element of the judgment; it was taken from nature itself. While circumcision (Gen 17:11) and the Sabbath (Exod 31:13-17; Ezek 20:12, 20), as signs of a covenant, were intended to remind man of God's covenant requirements, this sign is said to be for the purpose of reminding God (Gen 9:15, 16). The use of the rainbow as a sign of the promise that the earth would not again be destroyed by a flood, according to Keil, "presupposes that it appeared then for the first time in the vault and clouds of heaven." It is possible, however, that rainbows had appeared earlier and that now they were merely given covenantal significance. The Promise Two aspects stand preeminent in the promise made to Noah—the essence of the promise and the extent of the promise. God promises that "all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen 9:11). Though the two phrases are essentially parallel, the former focuses more specifically on physical life (both human and animal)

while the latter focuses on the destruction of the earth itself. Floods on a smaller scale may destroy many and cause considerable devastation, but never again will He permit worldwide destruction by means of a flood.

The promise is spoken of as an "everlasting covenant" *Berit olam*. This covenant with Noah is the first of five divinely originated covenants in Scripture explicitly described as "everlasting." The other four include the Abrahamic (Gen 17:7), Priestly (Num 25:10 -13), Davidic (2 Sam 23:5), and the New (Jer 32:40). The Mosaic Covenant, though divinely initiated, is not described as everlasting. Some view this covenant as a development of one specific aspect of the priestly legislation given in the Mosaic Covenant, lacking the same epoch-making character as the others mention above. The term can speak of "time without end" (i.e., eternity), but it is not always so intended. "The implication of the terminology is that these agreements are not temporary, not stopgap, nor on a trial basis. They are permanent in the sense that no other alternative arrangement to serve that purpose is envisioned." In other words, this covenant will continue until the earth is destroyed by fire (2 Pet 3:10-11; Rev 21:1). Furthermore, the impact of the Noahic Covenant on other covenants should not be overlooked. The certainty of other covenants is, at times, anchored in the order of nature promised in this first covenant. In Jer 33:20-21, God employs the unfailing regularity of the natural order as a guarantee of the covenant with David (2 Samuel 7) and the covenant with Levi (Numbers 17; 25:10-13). Even God's covenant of unfailing kindness and peace toward Israel is hereby assured (Isa 54:9- 10).

3.2.2 God's Covenant with Abraham

In making a covenant with Abraham, God promised to bless his descendants and make them His own special people—in return, Abraham was to remain faithful to God and to serve as a channel through which God's blessings could flow to the rest of the world (Gen. 12:1-3). Abraham's story begins with his passage with the rest of his family from Ur of the Chaldeans in ancient southern Babylonia (Gen. 11:31). He and his family moved north along the trade routes of the ancient world and settled in the prosperous trade center of Haran, several hundred miles to the northwest.

While living in Haran, at the age of 75, Abraham received a call from God to go to a strange, unknown land that God would show him. The Lord promised Abraham that He would make him and his descendants a great nation (Gen. 12:1-3). The promise must have seemed unbelievable to Abraham because his wife Sarah was childless (Gen. 11:30-31; 17:15). Abraham obeyed God with no hint of doubt or disbelief.

Abraham took his wife and his nephew, Lot, and went toward the land that God would show him. Abraham moved south along the trade routes from Haran, through Shechem and Bethel, to the land of Canaan. Canaan was a populated area at the time, inhabited by the war-like Canaanites; so, Abraham's belief that God would ultimately give this land to him and his descendants was an act of faith.

> The circumstances seemed quite difficult, but Abraham's faith in God's promises allowed him to trust in the Lord. In Genesis 15, the Lord reaffirmed His promise to Abraham. The relationship between God and Abraham should be understood as a covenant relationship—the most common form of arrangement between individuals in the ancient world. In this case, Abraham agreed to go to the land that God would show him (an act of faith on his part), and God agreed to make Abraham a great nation (Gen. 12:1-3).
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> In Genesis 15 Abraham became anxious about the promise of a nation being found in his descendants because of his advanced age—and the Lord then reaffirmed the earlier covenant. A common practice of that time among heirless families was to adopt a slave who would inherit the master's goods. Therefore, because Abraham was childless, he proposed to make a slave, Eliezer of Damascus, his heir (Gen. 15:2). But God rejected this action and challenged Abraham's faith: "'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be'" (Gen. 15:5).
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> Abraham's response is the model of believing faith: "And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for

righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). The rest of Genesis 15 consists of a ceremony between Abraham and God that was commonly used in the ancient world to formalize a covenant (Gen. 15:7-21). God repeated this covenant to Abraham' son, Isaac (Gen. 17:19). Stephen summarized the story in the book of Acts 7:1-8.

3.2.3 The Mosaic Covenant

The Israelites moved to Egypt during the time of Joseph. A new Pharaoh came upon the scene and turned the Israelites into common slaves. The people cried out to the God of their forefathers. "So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exo. 2:24). After a series of ten plagues upon the land of Egypt, God brought the Israelites out "of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand" (Exo. 32:11).

Three months after leaving the land of Egypt, the children of Israel camped at the base of Mount Sinai (Exo. 19:1). God promised to make a covenant with the Israelites (Exo. 19:3-6). Before they even knew the conditions of the contract, the people agreed to abide by whatever God said (Exo. 19:8). This covenant was between God and the people of Israel—you and I are not a party in this contract (and never have been). The Ten Commandments are the foundation of the covenant, but they are not the entirety of it.

After giving the first ten commands, the people asked the Lord to speak no more (Exo. 20:18-20). Moses then drew near to the presence of God to hear the rest of the covenant (Exo. 20:21). After receiving the Law, Moses spoke the words of the covenant to all of the people, and the people agreed to obey (Exo. 24:4).

Moses then wrote the conditions of the covenant down, offered sacrifices to God, and then sprinkled both the book and the people with blood to seal the covenant (Exo. 24:8). This covenant between God and the people of Israel was temporary—God promised a day when He would make a new covenant, not only with Israel but also with all mankind. "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with

their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer. 31:31-34).

Importance of the Covenants

Let no one underestimate the importance and significance of a correct understanding of the divine covenants. It is much more than an intellectual pursuit. They provide a most foundational theological anchor for understanding God's working in human history. In the Noahic Covenant, God showed His gracious mercy toward all mankind, both redeemed and unredeemed, causing it to rain on the just and the unjust and assuring the ongoing, uninterrupted cycle of seasons. In it He demonstrated His unwillingness to allow the sinfulness of man to derail His plan set forth in Genesis 3:15, His unwillingness to allow the sinfulness of man to abrogate the pre-fall command to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth," a command reiterated after the flood to Noah.

In the Abrahamic Covenant, God demonstrated His unmerited favor and unilateral choice of Israel as "the apple of His eye," a special people called out from among the nations through whom the Messiah would come. In the Priestly Covenant, God promised the perpetual priesthood of the line of Phinehas that carries all the way through to serving in the LORD's earthly millennial temple. In the Mosaic Covenant, God revealed His holiness and the heinousness of sin. The daily sacrifices provided a constant reminder of the need for the shedding of blood for the remission of sin, for the propitiating of God's wrath. In the Davidic Covenant, God promised the perpetual reign of the descendants of David, ultimately fulfilled in the Messiah and His reign. In the New Covenant, God evidenced anew His continual pouring out of grace, a promise through which He would put His law within His people, writing it on

their hearts. Understanding these covenants will shape a person's understanding of Scripture. It will reflect a hermeneutical course that will determine the pitch of one's eschatological sails. Careful attention to these six covenants will bear an overwhelming abundance of fruitfulness. When God enters into a unilateral covenant guaranteed only by His own faithfulness; when God enters into a covenant void of any human requirements to keep it in force; when God establishes a covenant that will continue as long as there is day and night and summer and winter, then great care must be taken not to erect man-made limitations that would bankrupt the heart and soul of these covenants and annul the glorious full realization of all that He promised through them. Their significance cannot be overestimated.

04

The Books of Pentateuch: An Overview

4.1 The Book of Genesis

Genesis is the book of beginnings. It records the beginning of time, life, sin, salvation, the human race, and the Hebrew nation. It begins with primeval history centered in four major events: the Creation, the Fall, the Flood, and the dispersion of the nations. Genesis then narrates the history of four great patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

Title: The English title, Genesis, comes from the Greek translation (Septuagint, LXX) meaning "origins"; whereas, the Hebrew title is derived from the Bible's very first word, translated "in the beginning." Genesis serves to introduce the Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the Old Testament), and the entire Bible.

The influence of Genesis in Scripture is demonstrated by its being quoted over 35 times in the New Testament and hundreds of allusions appearing in both Testaments. The story line of salvation which begins in Genesis 3 is not completed until Revelation chapters 21 and 22, where

the eternal kingdom of redeemed believers is gloriously pictured. The title, Genesis (Greek, "Beginning"), was applied to this book by the Septuagint. The Hebrew title (*bereshit*) comes from the first word of the book in Hebrew ("In the beginning"). The book is divided by 10 units (*toledot*) under the rubric: "These are the generations of." Thus, some have suggested that Moses had access to the patriarchal records.

Authorship - Date: With very few exceptions, Jewish and Christian scholars alike believed that Moses wrote Genesis. His authorship is supported by the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Palestinian Talmud, the Apocrypha (Ecclus. 45:4; 2 Macc. 7:30), the writings of Philo (Life of Moses 3:39), and Josephus (Antiquities of the Jews 4:8:45; Contra Apion I.8. Moses life extended 120 years (Deut. 34:7). The first 40 years (1525–1485 B.C.) he spent as Pharaoh's son, learning the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). He spent the next 40 years (1485-1445 B.C.) in the desert of Midian as a shepherd (Exodus 2:15; Acts 7:30). The final 40 years (1445-1405 B.C.), he spent wandering in the Sinai wilderness with the children of Israel (Deut. 8:2). He very likely wrote all of the books of the Pentateuch after his call to lead the people out of Egypt, as recounted in Exodus 3. This would have been in his last 40 years of life, during the wilderness wanderings.

Background – Setting: The initial setting for Genesis is eternity past. God then, by willful act and divine Word, spoke all creation into existence, furnished it, and finally breathed life into a lump of dirt which He fashioned in His image to become Adam. God made mankind the crowning point of His creation, i.e., His companions who would enjoy fellowship with Him and bring glory to His name. The historical background for the early events in Genesis is clearly Mesopotamian. While it is difficult to pinpoint precisely the historical moment for which this book was written, Israel first heard Genesis sometime prior to crossing the Jordan River and entering the Promised Land (ca. 1405 B.C.). Genesis has 3 distinct, sequential geographical settings:

(1) Primeval history (1-11)- Paradise and Mesopotomia

(2) Patriarchal History -The Promised Land (chapters 12-36); and Egypt (chapters 37-50).

Genesis 1-11 (primeval history) reveals the origins of the universe, i.e., the beginnings of time and space and many of the firsts in human experience, such as marriage, family, the Fall, sin, redemption, judgment, and nations. Genesis 12-50 (patriarchal history), explained to Israel how they came into existence as a family whose ancestry could be traced to Eber (hence the "Hebrews"; Gen. 10:24-25), and even more remotely to Shem, the son of Noah (hence the "Semites"; Gen. 10:21). God's people came to understand not only their ancestry and family history, but also the origins of their institutions, customs, languages, and different cultures, especially basic human experiences such as sin and death. One final theme of both theological and historical significance sets Genesis apart from other books of Scripture, in that the first book of Scripture corresponds closely with the final book. In the book of Revelation, the paradise which was lost in Genesis will be regained. The apostle John clearly presented the events recorded in his book as future resolutions to the problems which began as a result of the curse in Genesis 3. His focus is upon the effects of the Fall in the undoing of creation and the manner in which God rids His creation of the curse effect. In John's own words, "There will no longer be any curse" (Rev. 22:3). Not surprisingly, in the final chapter of God's Word, believers will find themselves back in the Garden of Eden, the eternal paradise of God, eating from the tree of life (Rev. 22:1-14). At that time, they will partake, wearing robes washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 22:14).

Genesis is the foundational book to the rest of the Bible. It's important theological themes include the doctrines of God, Creation, man, sin and salvation. It teaches the importance of substitutionary atonement and of faith in God's revelation of Himself to mankind. It also records the first messianic prophecies of the Bible predicting that the Redeemer would be born of the seed of a woman (3:15); through the line of Seth (4:25); a son of Shem (9:27); the offspring of Abraham (12:3); Isaac (21:12); and Jacob (25:23); and from the tribe of Judah (49:10). Genesis covers more time than any other book in

the Bible. It opens with the words: "In the beginning God created" (1:1), and it ends with "in a coffin in Egypt (50:26). Thus, it covers the whole plight of man, who was created in God's image to live forever, but because of sin became destined for the grave. The book leaves the reader anxiously anticipating the redemptive intervention of God.

Two Accounts of Creation

Each religion and belief system has a story of how the world was created and human life came to be. In many of these "creation myths," a god or gods shape, manipulative, or in some way interact with a pre-existing darkness or chaos to create order. Within Judeo-Christian beliefs, the Book of Genesis, describes not one, but two distinct accounts of how God created the earth, its inhabitants and mankind. A reading of Genesis reveals two distinctly different creation stories: the first spans Genesis 1:1-2:4a and the second continues from Genesis 2:4b to the end of the third chapter. These two accounts of creation include:

- A cosmocentric account of how God created the heavens and earth out of the void
- An anthropocentric account of how humanity came to populate the earth

Scholars believe the second story is older than the first, perhaps dating to as early as 950 BCE, while the first was probably written by the priestly caste after the Hebrews had returned from Babylonian captivity sometime around 530 BCE.

Genesis 1: Cosmocentric Account of Creation in Genesis

The first creation account describes how God created the world by bringing order to chaos. Here, the world was preexistent - meaning God did not create the world out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). Rather, "The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep" (Genesis 1:2) God's role was then to bring goodness and order to this world depicted as "formless," "void," "darkness," and "deep" - each descriptor symbolic of chaos and "evil."

During the six days of creation, God adheres to a strict pattern to create order: the first three days parallel the second three days.

- On day 1, He creates light to create day and night (Genesis 1:5). This is mirrored on day 4, when God creates the sun, moon and stars (Genesis 1:14).
- On day 2, God creates the waters and sky (Genesis 1:6-7) whereas on day 5, He creates fish and birds (Genesis 1:20-22).
- On day 3, God creates in two stages, first dry land then vegetation (Genesis 1:11-12) whereas on day 6, He creates land animals first, then mankind (Genesis 1:24-30).

The Genesis account goes to great lengths to avoid using certain words that might be associated with pagan deities. Unlike all of God's other creations, the author avoids describing the water creation as "good." He avoids using the singular form for sea (*yam*), preferring the plural seas (*yamim*), because Yam was a sea god in Canaanite mythology. He also avoids using the terms sun (*shemesh*) and moon (*yareah*) to disassociate God from pagan deities.

By showing God created the world out of a pre-existing substance, thus creating "good" and separating it from chaos or evil, Genesis addresses the problem of evil - how God and evil can exist within the world. In polytheistic belief systems, evil isn't a problem because destructive acts can be ascribed to the many gods capable of harming humans. But in monotheistic belief systems where only one good, moral, all-powerful God is worshiped, the presence of evil is difficult to justify. Here, God is not to be blamed for "evil" because evil was already present. God took the materials he had and brought forth goodness from them.

Genesis 2: Anthropocentric Account of Creation in Genesis

The second account of creation (Genesis 2:4b-25) describes how God created man, created the Garden of Eden, then made Adam a female companion. In Genesis 2:4b–25, "the LORD God formed man from the dust of the earth. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being." (Genesis 2:7)

This anthropocentric account differs from the cosmocentric account in a number of ways.

- Different names for God: The first refers to the Creator as "God," or as "Elohim" in Hebrew, while the second refers to the Creator

as the "LORD God," or YHWH Elohim, YHWH being God's Hebrew name.

- Different methodologies for creation: In the first, God creates through speaking. In the second, God takes physical actions (planting a Garden, breathing into Adam's nostrils, etc).
- Different order to creation: In the first, mankind is presented as the climax of God's creation after He created vegetation and animals. Here, human males and females are created at the same time. In the second, God first creates man, then plants vegetation in the Garden of Eden, then makes animals and finally woman.

Creation of Man in Scripture

In Scripture, man is a clean break from lower forms of life. Evolutionary teaching on the origin of man and Biblical teaching on the origin of man are mutually exclusive. One cannot believe both. They are each an article of faith. The "missing link" between man and his beginnings, according to Scripture, is God. But, He is not "missing" at all. He has been there all the time.

The reason we say that evolution and creation are mutually exclusive is because of what Genesis 2:7 says in Hebrew, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul." The "LORD" in this verse is Yahweh (or Jehovah - YHVH). (When it is spelled "Lord," the Hebrew is "Adonai.") Jehovah (YHVH) is the covenant God of Israel. In Genesis 2:7, Yahweh (YHVH) is the God who formed man.[1]

The word for "formed" is the Hebrew verb *yatsar*. It is used to describe the actions of a potter making a vessel. As the potter's wheel spins, he shapes the clay with his fingers. The design is in his mind, but he shapes the vessel with his hands. The mechanics God used in forming man, we do not know. But the word used to describe it is suggestive.

In Hebrew the word "man" is *adam*. Some say that *adam* means "mankind." But where did "mankind" come from? Obviously, from man, the first man. God formed man from the "dust" ("dirt") of the ground. The word for "ground" is *adamah*. Adam was made of *adamah* (a female form of the noun).[2]

Man was formed. But he was still lifeless. There was no continuity whatever with any lower form of life. Man was lifeless until something else happened. The next phrase says, "He breathed (or blew) into his nostrils the breath of life, the *mishnat chayyim* (the very breathing in and out of life) and man became a living soul (or being)."

When God blew man's breath into his nose, He also blew in his being! (Paul used this terminology when he spoke much later to the Athenians in Act 17, "In Him we live and move and have our being.") The moment He withdraws His breath from our nostrils, we lose our life and we become dust again. We lose our being, as far as the physical body is concerned. But, once we have being, we cannot be destroyed altogether.

This truth is evident in that just before the final judgment, all will be raised again, our being joined with a new body, then the final judgment. And all will go to one place or another, like it or not. That is God's plan. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). This is why we insist that evolution and Biblical Creation are mutually exclusive in describing the origin of man.

Our God created the entire universe. He ordained the Sabbath as a time for us to demonstrate that we believe in His creation. We rest one day because He rested one day. In keeping a rest day, we witness to Him as Creator (Exodus 31:13f). "The Sabbath is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed" (Ex 31:17)

Fall of Humanity

What is sin, or fall of humanity? We can look for an explanation in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis. Here the seemingly endless struggle between good and evil is described in the imagery of the serpent tempting Adam and Eve with the forbidden fruit. CCC teaches that "Sin is present in human history; any attempt to ignore it or to give this dark reality other names would be futile. To try to understand what sin is, one must first recognize the profound relation of man to God, for only in this relationship is the evil of sin unmasked in its true identity as humanity's rejection of God and opposition to

him, even as it continues to weigh heavy on human life and history" CCC 386.

Through the Fall of Adam and Eve, the harmony of creation was also destroyed. If we continue to read the Book of Genesis, we see how Adam and Eve became aware of their sinful condition, were driven out of the garden, and were forced to live by the sweat of their brow. The beauty and harmony of God's creative plan was disrupted. This was not the way it was meant to be. Once sin entered into life and into our world, all harmony with God, with self, with each other, and with the world around us was shattered. We call the Fall and its results "Original Sin." Each one of us is heir to Adam and Eve. Their sin shattered God's created harmony, not only for them but also for us. We experience the effects of Original Sin in our daily life. This explains why it is so difficult to do good or to do what we should.

Scripture uses figurative language in describing the account of the Fall in Genesis 3 but affirms an event that took place at the beginning of human history. The language is figurative, but the reality is not a fantasy. The gift of freedom, given to the first man and woman, was meant to draw them closer to God, to each other, and to their destiny. God asked them—as he asks us—to recognize their human limits and to trust in him. In the temptation, they were lured into trying to surpass their being human. "You will be like gods" (Gn 3:5). They abused their freedom, failed to trust God, and disobeyed his command. They lost paradise and its gifts. And death became part of the human experience. For the people of ancient Israel, sin was a spiritual death that leads to separation from God, the source of life, and consequently, to the death of the body.

The sin of Adam and Eve has been called Original Sin since the time of St. Augustine (AD 354-430). But the Church's belief in an ancient alienation from God was part of Revelation from the start. What is Original Sin? It is a deprivation, a loss of the original holiness and righteousness with which our first parents were created. When God made them, he filled Adam and Eve with all the grace and virtue they would ever need, and they experienced a close

relationship with God beyond our ability to know. Because of the unity of the human race, everyone is affected by the sin of our first parents, just as, in turn, humanity is restored to a right relationship with God by Jesus Christ. "Just as through one person sin entered the world, and by sin, death and . . . just as through the disobedience of one person the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one the many will be made righteous. . . . Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more" (Rom 5:12, 19, 20b). Though Original Sin has had far-reaching consequences, of greater consequence has been God's mercy to us through the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Partriarchal Narratives

Gn 12-50 chapters are generally called the patriarchal Narratives. The stories of the great patriarchs of Israel Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph are narrated here. Israel's ultimate biological ancestor is commonly known as Abraham, but when we first encounter him in Genesis 12 he is named Abram. His original name was Abram; God will change his name later to the more familiar Abraham. That story is told in Genesis 17. Three main ideas are dominant in the Patriarchal narratives:

1. Promise: Israel believes herself to be a people of promise. Israel traces this back to Abraham. In this regard, Gen 12:1-3 is one of the most important texts in the OT. God made promises to Israel's ancestor Abraham; those promises were passed on to his descendants Isaac and Jacob, and eventually to the people Israel as a whole. Main elements of promise include:

Land: in Gen 12:1, Yahweh commands Abraham to "go to a land that I will show you." Quickly this becomes a more explicit promise - "I will give this land to your descendants." The land promised is the little strip of land between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, which would become the land of Israel.

Nationhood: the nation Israel is in view. God promised Abraham many descendants (13:16; 15:1-6), who would become the nation Israel.

Name: it's interesting to see how this has worked out. Three of the world's living religions still revere Abraham even today: Jews still look at Abraham as their ultimate biological ancestor. Muslims do the same; in Muslim tradition, Abraham is considered the biological ancestor of the Arab peoples [Islam originated in Arabia], and Abraham is mentioned in the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam. Christians regard Abraham as a spiritual ancestor, since Paul in the New Testament refers to Abraham as the "father of believers."So, three of the world's living religions, whose membership totals over half the population of the world today, continue to revere Abraham over 3500 years after he lived.

Mission: "through you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3). Although blessing held great promise in chaps 1-2 (and was mentioned again in chaps 5 & 9), it was overshadowed by curse in chaps 3-11. Here is a fresh breath of it again. The reader is left with hope. This blessing is for all the families of the earth. "The mission of Israel in history was to effect a reconciliation among all the families of the earth." While this theme was buried in the centuries to come, note that it does appear at times in Israel's worship: Ps 47:9; Isa 19:23-25; 42:6 (Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence* 75).

2. Covenant: A part of the promises to Abraham was the promise of covenant relationship (Gen 17). This received significant elaboration at Mt. Sinai - see Exodus 19, another one of the most important texts in the OT. Whereas in Genesis a covenant was made with Abraham and then his immediate descendants, by the time of Sinai his descendants have multiplied into a people, whom God invites to be his special people (vv 4-6). The notion of covenant was significant to Israel's self-identity and sense of destiny: "At the core of the ancestral narratives is the conviction that Yahweh has chosen a particular group of people out of all the nations of the earth to be his special covenant partners" (Christopher D. Stanley, *The Hebrew Bible: A Comparative Approach* [Fortress, 2010], 224). Note that Exod 19:6 - "you will be a kingdom of priests" - may be an intentional development of Gen 12:3. The Genesis text does not specify *how* blessing will come to the families of the world, only that it will be through Abraham. "Kingdom of priests" may be an elaboration: Israel is to function like a priest, being a mediator between God and persons, bringing the knowledge of God to the people of the world.

3. Torah (instruction, law): while Exodus 19 says that Israel unanimously accepts God's invitation to covenant relationship (vv 7-8), at that point they don't know what God expects of them. They need to know the *stipulations of the covenant*. That is the purpose of the Torah - the laws and instructions found in Exodus 20-23; Leviticus; and Deuteronomy. This Torah may be an elaboration of Exod 19:6 - "you shall be a *holy* nation." In the OT the word "holy" carries the root meaning of "set apart." Israel knows that this Torah is given to her, not to other peoples; it sets her apart, and therefore it is also a mark of the fact that she is God's people.

The Storyline of Abraham

The story of Abraham is prefaced in 11:10-26 by a summary history in genealogical form from the family of Noah (the second major figure in Genesis, after Adam) to the family of Terah, which included Abram (Genesis's third major figure). It is then introduced in 11:27-32 by Terah's family history. The information this family history offers (the birth of Lot, the death of his father Haran, Abram's marriage to Sarai, her inability to have children, the name of his brother Nahor's wife, the family's departure from Ur to Haran and Terah's death there) provides the background to various incidents in the chapters that follow, and seems to be included for this purpose rather than for its intrinsic interest. In theHebrew Bible a new lection begins with Yahweh's summons to Abram (12:1), and the real opening of the Abram story lies here.

Grammatically, chapter 12 begins less emphatically than RSV may imply (there is no 'Now' in the Hebrew). But in terms of contents, there is an air of moment about 12:1 in that at this point Yahweh himself speaks, for the first time since the Tower of Babel story, and thus for the first time in the Abram narrative, since 11:10-32 has not referred to his involvement. Now he intervenes with a command (12:1) and an undertaking (12:2-3). Abram expresses his commitment by doing as Yahweh told him (12:4-5a), a note which recurs later in the story (with 12:4a cf. 17:23b, 21:4b - though the verb is different each time). And when Abram has travelled to the country he was directed to, Yahweh then reasserts his commitment by renewing his promise (12:5b-9). He will give this land to Abram's descendants. Abram himself completes a preliminary tour of the land, building an altar to worship

Yahweh in the (relative) north at Shechem, another in the centre of the land between Bethel and Ai, and moving on to the south to the area of Hebron which will be his home.

But it is not until 13:18 that we are told of the building of a third altar there. In the meantime some odd notes are struck, such as to introduce discord into the theme which opened up somewhat idyllically in 12:1-9.

Actually, obstacles to the fulfilment of Yahweh's undertaking have been referred to already. 'To your descendants I will give this land' (12:7a). But the land is occupied by someone else (12:6b), so how can Abram have it, and his wife cannot have children (11:30), so how can he have descendants?

12:10 - 13:4 relate a further threat to the promise. Yahweh intends to make Abram a great nation, to make him a blessing to the nations, and to give the land of Canaan to his descendants. But as a result of an entirely human response to a real crisis, each element in this promise receives a kind of anti-fulfilment. Abram leaves the land of Canaan, watches the potential mother of his descendants join the Pharaoh's harem, and causes Yahweh to bring affliction on the Pharaoh and his house. All ends well (very well, indeed: see 12:16; 13:2), yet the story is a somber one.

13:5-13 provides another surprise. There is strife within the (wider) family of Abram itself, arising out of the presence of other peoples in the land promised to them And Abram's generosity in proposing a solution to the problem deprives him of the part of the land that most resembles not only the Egypt from whose prosperity Abram has recently profited but also the Eden from which Genesis's first major figure was expelled. Sombrely, the land which is like the one Adam lost is inhabited by people like those among whom Noah lived (with 13:13 cf. 6:5), and this fact is to be picked up later (Gn. 18 - 19). Meanwhile Yahweh reaffirms the promise of land and descendants (13:14-17) and Abram begins to enter into his inheritance as he makes the home and offers the worship at Hebron that brings the narrative, interrupted after 12:9, to the end of a section (13:18).

The key theme which emerges from these opening two chapters of the Abraham story is that Yahweh made certain commitments to Abram, commitments which met some measure of fulfilment but were

ever threatened by circumstantial and human factors. And every major element in the rest of the Abraham narrative relates to this theme stated in these opening chapters. Yahweh has undertaken to bless Abram with descendants and land and to make him a blessing for other peoples. But the path to the fulfilment of this undertaking is littered with obstacles. The theme of Yahweh's blessing appears clearly in Genesis 14. In other respects the chapter portrays Abram in a very different way from the other patriarchal stories, and this highlights the theme's appearance when the chapter comes to its narrative climax in its final scene (14:17-24). Here the kings who occupy the stage for the first scene (14:1-12) and Abram and his allies who occupy, it for the second (14:13-16) at last appear together. But the centre of the stage is taken by Melchizedek the king of Salem, who appears suddenly in the denouement, though he had been absent from the earlier scenes. And his words bring the chapter directly into the theme announced and first developed in chapters 12 - 13, because they are words of blessing on Abram (see 14:18-20). They draw our attention to what amounts to a fulfilment of the original promise of blessing in 12:2-3, and coming from the king of Salem constitute a further fulfilment of the words there about Abram's name becoming great among the nations.

The end of the story, however, relates Abram's refusal to be made rich by the king of Sodom (14:21-24). How then is he to become prosperous? 'After these things' Yahweh tells him not to be afraid. The one who delivered Abram's enemies into his hand (14:20) is Abram's deliverer (15:1).[2] Abram has refused possessions gained through his involvement with the king of Sodom (14:21-24), so Yahweh promises that his descendants will be given great possessions (15:14). Abram has been in covenant with human allies (14:13), but now Yahweh commits himself to a covenant relationship with him. Thus Genesis 15 takes up several features of Genesis 14. Genesis 15 itself focuses on the questions of offspring (15:2-6) and of land (15:7-21). The problem with the first is that Abram 'continues childless', but he accepts Yahweh's renewed promise. Then, as Abram finds it difficult to believe in the second undertaking, Yahweh renews this in a more emphatic way in the form of a covenant, though also solemnly revealing how long it will be before the chief obstacle to its fulfilment (the presence of other peoples in the land) can justly be removed.

Chapter 16 returns to the promise of children. Abram begets a son by his wife's maid. The action has been seen as a sinful human attempt to anticipate the fulfilment of Yahweh's words, though the story contains no hint of this judgment. Indeed, Yahweh reasserts his undertaking to Abram with regard to Hagar and her son (16:11; cf. 13:14-17, 15:4-5). The birth of Ishmael is a step towards one aspect of the fulfilment of that undertaking. Genesis 17 opens with a very full statement of the theme. It begins with God's revelation (17:la; cf. 12:1a; but especially 15:1a), his self-announcement (17:1b, cf. 15:1b), and his challenge (17:1b; cf. 12:1b; 15:1b). It speaks of descendants and land (17:2-8), but the key-word 'blessing' is replaced by the key-word 'covenant' - which in effect means 'a commitment to bless'. Descendants are explicitly promised as 'blessing' both for Sarai/Sarah through the birth of a son (17:16) and for Hagar's son Ishmael (17:20).

The story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah also keeps relating to the theme of blessing and descendants. The three visitors declare specifically that Sarah will have a son next spring (18:1-15). Abraham's dialogue with Yahweh (18:16-33) arises out of the promise (18:17-19). Although he fails to rescue Sodom (19:1-28), it is not because he is not seeking to be a blessing there, and at least he succeeds in rescuing Lot (19:29). Even the narrative about Lot and his daughters, with which the story closes (19:30-38), relates to the theme of descendants. Chapter 20, however, reveals that Abraham's capacity for imperilling the promise is not yet exhausted. Although the chapter may not imply that Abraham is outside the promised land (as he was in 12:10-20; cf. 26:1-3) and shows that he can still be a means of blessing as a man of prayer (20:7, 17; cf. 18:22-33), at first he brings trouble to Abimelek instead (20:9, 18).

Then at last the promise of a son is fulfilled (21:1-7). This raises the question of the relationship between Abraham's two sons. 21:8-21 reaffirms that both will become nations, though Isaac will have a special significance (21:12-13, cf. 17:20-21); the pattern is repeated in the story of Esau and Jacob (cf. 27:28-29, 39-40). 21:22-34 returns to Abraham and Abimelek, with a narrative which tacitly illustrates the fulfilment of another aspect of God's undertaking. Abraham is significant enough to be in a special relationship with the king of Gerar, who acknowledges, 'God is with you in all that you do' (21:22). Abraham's name has become great. Chapter 22 again comes to its

climax with a restatement of God's words of blessing (22:15-18). The narrator does not see the command to sacrifice Isaac as a puzzling imperilling of God's purpose to give Abraham descendants through this son, but as God's testing of Abraham (22:1-12). It is when Abraham passes the test that the words of blessing are again reaffirmed.

After a flashback to Haran (22:20-24) which provides the background to chapter 24, Genesis 23 tells of the death of Sarah and of Abraham's purchase of a burial place for her in Hebron. Like the begetting of a child by Hagar, Abraham's purchase of this plot of land might seem a sinful, human act. Why should the one to whom God said he would give the land pay money for it? Is Abraham looking for a false kind of security in the actual legal possession of a foothold (rather, a skeleton-hold!) on the land itself? But the narrative passes no negative judgment. Sarah dies 'in the land of Canaan' (23:2) and the 'possession' of the land of Canaan (17:8; cf. 48:4) begins in the 'possession' of a burial place for her there (23:4, 9, 20; cf. 49:30; 50:13). Chapter 24 (introduced by 22:20-24) is the last narrative proper in the Abraham story, and, indeed, the longest and most finely worked one of them all. It begins by telling us that the undertaking with which the Abraham story opened has actually been fulfilled: 'Yahweh had blessed Abraham in every way' (24:1; cf. 24:35). But blessings can be lost and inheritances sacrificed. So measures need to be taken to ensure that the descendants are born 'within the family' (24:2-4) and without leaving the land (24:5-8). The chapter is then the account of how the right mother for Abraham's grandchildren is found within these conditions. All that remains is to close off the story of the blessed man Abraham (25:1-11).

Certain Events in Abrahamic Story

1. Barrenness and the Birth of Ishmael: To become the father of the people Israel, Abraham has to have some descendants. If he dies childless, the promises die with him. Much of the Abraham narrative focuses on the difficulty he and his wife Sarah have trying to bear a child. They both keep getting older, with no child yet born. "Barrenness was a shame and a reproach in Israel (Gen 30:1-2, 22-23; 1 Samuel 1:3-7, 11); it was interpreted as divine punishment or at least a sign of divine displeasure (Gen 16:2; 20:18; 30:26; 1 Sam 1:5; 2 Sam 6:20-23). It brought gloating derision from other women, especially from co-wives who had proved their fertility (1 Sam 1:6; cf

Gen 30:1, 8 and 16:4), and it threatened the woman's status as a wife (Gen 30:1-2, 15-20)."

Sarah suggests to Abraham that he take Sarah's slave Hagar as a 2nd wife and have children through her. Note how Sarah phrases this in v. 2: "it may be that I shall have children through her." We know from archaeology that this custom of surrogate motherhood was a common practice of that day. The practice is mentioned in the lawcode of the Babylonian king Hammurabi, # 146. According to the legal custom of that day, a child born would legally be considered the child of the barren first wife. So, when Hagar eventually gave birth to a son named Ishmael, the boy was legally considered Sarah's son. Ishmael is important for this reason: in both Old Testament and Arabic tradition, he is considered the father of the Arab people.

Did Abraham commit an act of immorality or unfaithfulness by having a child with Hagar? Regardless of what we might think of this custom, it was widely practiced in the ancient Near Eastern world, with no moral stigma attached. It was common for men to have multiple wives simultaneously, and we should also notice that the biblical text itself never charges Abraham with immorality. Nor is this an act of unfaith. Some interpreters do charge Abraham with unfaith, saying that he should just have waited for God to fulfil the promise to give him a son. I don't think so. Look again at the end of chap 16 -he was 86 years old when Ishmael was born, and Sarah was only 10 years younger. How long were they supposed to wait for God to do it all? I would suggest that this is in fact an act of faith. Although God's promise to give Abraham a son had gone unfulfilled for many years, Abraham had not given up on it - that would have been unfaith. He still believed that the promise would happen. He was using a common custom of the day to make it happen. It is again noteworthy that the biblical text itself does not charge him with unfaith.

2. Abraham's name change: his original name was Abram, and that is how the Genesis text has referred to him up to this point. Abram is a compound word in Hebrew: *"ab"* is the Hebrew word for "father," and *"ram"* in Hebrew means "great, exalted." Put them together and the name Abram means "great father."

God changed his name to Abraham: *"raham"* in Hebrew means "many, multitude." So the significance of the new name is "father of

a multitude." Therefore the name change emphasizes the promise that God has once again made to him, that he will be the father of many.

3. Circumcision: Circumcision was widely practiced in the ancient world; Israel is not the only people to have done it. Circumcision was practiced among Israel's neighbors in Egypt, Canaan, and among other Semitic groups, but not in Assyria or Babylon, or among the Philistines. People perform circumcision for a variety of reasons: (1) some cultures do it as a matter of hygiene. (2) some cultures perform it as a puberty rite - a ritual marking a young man's transition from boyhood to manhood. (3) Israel practiced it as a sign of the covenant relationship between God and Israel. Circumcision in Israel was for males only.

4. Isaac: A son was born to Sarah - Isaac. Isaac's significance is that the people Israel trace their ancestry back to Abraham through Isaac. The name Isaac in Hebrew means "he laughs." Sure - what else would you name a child born to a 100-year-old man and a 90-year-old woman?

The story of Isaac

The question now arises whether the Isaac story continues the same theme. That it does is hinted by the closing verse of the Abraham narrative: 'after the death of Abraham God blessed Isaac his son' (25:11). But before the story of Isaac is developed, that of his elder brother is summarized (25:12-18)., In his descendants God's words find part, if not the central part, of their fulfilment.

The first real Isaac narrative follows in 25:19-26. In contents, of course, chapters 22 and 24 (and others) have already centred on Isaac. Yet in the structure of Genesis those chapters belong to the Abraham story. Strictly, indeed, it was the Terah story, since 25:12 and 19 are the first formal section headings since 11:27. But the report of Terah's death in 11:32 and Abraham's prominence henceforth suggest that de facto 12:1 - 25:11 is the Abraham story. As the Abraham story has a central concern with his sons, so the Isaac story, which extends from 25:19 to 35:29, includes - indeed, is dominated by stories about Esau and Jacob. The nature of God's promises no doubt explains the Genesis narrative's preoccupation with the question of descendants and the consequent prominence of stories about children in the narratives about their parents.

25:19-26 thus constitutes an unexpected but understandable beginning to the Isaac narrative. The event it relates took place in connection with the birth of his twin sons when he was sixty (25:26), and first the author has to summarize for us the first sixty years of his life and the background to this birth, in two or three verses (25:19-21). We are then told of an event from (?) twenty years later (25:27-34), before coming in the next chapter to incidents that seem to have happened before the twins' birth.

So the Isaac narrative unfolds in a rather jerky way. But this gives added emphasis to 25:22-26 and 27-34, and on examination these paragraphs turn out to state the way the blessing theme is to be developed in the Isaac story. As in the Abraham narrative, a word from Yahweh is set at the beginning of the Isaac story. But whereas the word to Abram includes the promise that he will be made a great nation, the word to Isaac's wife speaks of her mothering two nations. In the event, the word to Abram (though often imperilled) also received a double fulfilment, through Ishmael and Isaac; it was the younger of the half-brothers who was to be preferred (17:21; 21:12), but there is no suggestion of rivalry between them though there was tension between their mothers (16:4-6; 21:9-10). The word to Rebekah, however, already speaks of the preferment of the younger of the two sons she is to bear, and hints at the trouble there will be between them (25:23). Their actual birth sees the beginning of the fulfilment of Yahweh's word (25:26), the differences between them as they grow up relates to it (25:27-28), and the actual supplanting of the elder by the younger begins through the latter's throwing away the right of primogeniture (25:29-34).

The original blessing theme is explicitly resumed in chapter 26. Here Yahweh appears, commands, and promises, as he had to Abraham (26:2-5; cf. 12:1-3). Although Isaac made mistakes very like his father's (26:6-11; cf. 12:10- 20; 20:1-18), he also received blessings very like his father's (26:12-14; cf. 13:1-4). He was involved in strife like his father (26:15-22; cf. 13:5-13; 21:25-32), but he was reassured by Yahweh and he worshipped like his father (26:23-25; cf. 13:14-18; 21:33) and was acknowledged by the nations like his father (26:26-33; cf. 14:19-20; 21:22-24). Indeed, it is explicitly because Yahweh committed himself to Abraham, because Abraham obeyed him, and

as the God of Abraham, that Yahweh appears to Isaac (26:3,5,24). Nevertheless, there is one distinctive motif characteristic of the Isaac narrative, the promise 'I will be with you' (26:3) or 'I am with you' (26:24). It reappears in the form of Abimelek's acknowledgment of Isaac, 'Yahweh is with you' (26:28), as it had featured in Abimelek's acknowledgment of Abraham (21:22). It reappears in the Jacob material in the chapters that follow (28:15, 20, 31:3, 5, 42, 35:3), and constitutes the distinctive aspect to the promise and experience of Yahweh's blessing as this is portrayed in the Isaac narrative.

After chapter 26 the relationship between the two sons dominates the story of Isaac, as 25:19-34 has advertised it would. In chapter 27 at least, however, the theme of who is to receive the blessing is central (27:4, 7, 10, 12, 19, 23, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 41), and the specific terms of Isaac's actual blessing recall Yahweh's words to Abraham (26:29, cf. 12:2-3). The modern reader is appalled at Jacob's deceit, and the narrative hints at the poetic justice of his subsequent deceit by Laban, yet it is not so concerned to draw moral lessons as it is to invite us to read the story in the context of 25:23 and to marvel at how Yahweh's word is fulfilled in extraordinary ways.

27:46 takes up another theme of the Abraham story, the provision of a wife for his son. 26:34-35 form the background to this section. Formally set in the context of his diplomatic self-exile from home, Jacob's quest for a wife becomes a central concern of the rest of the Isaac narrative. Yet, although Jacob looks once again to the family of Nahor for a bride, and finds her in the household of the Laban who had so graciously received Abraham's servant seeking a bride for Isaac, the finding of Rachel is so different from the finding of Rebekah. Isaac's father implies that it is simply inappropriate for his son to marry a Canaanite woman (24:3), Jacob's father acts under wifely pressure that itself arises from a mere concern for domestic harmony (27:46, 28:1). Isaac was on no account to leave the promised land, but Jacob does so to distance himself from Esau (chapter 28). Abraham's servant undertakes his journey by the step-by-step direction of Yahweh and his angel (24:7, 12-21, 27, 50-52), but Yahweh is unmentioned in Jacob's journey once he leaves Canaan (29:1-30). No hitch deprives Isaac of Rebekah, but Jacob is for a while cheated by a trick worthy of his own cunning - and one which reasserts the rights of the first-born (29:26).

Nevertheless, Jacob's journey is set in the context of Yahweh's commitment to him. Before he leaves home Isaac prays for him that he may indeed be fruitful and inherit the land (28:3-4). Before he leaves the land itself Yahweh appears to Jacob in a dream and declares, as he had to Abraham and to Isaac, that he will give Jacob the land, that Jacob's descendants will be very numerous, that other nations will bless themselves by Jacob, and that he will be with Jacob wherever he goes (28:12-15), and Jacob commits himself to Yahweh on the basis of this promise (28:20-22). And indeed the sojourn with Laban sees the fulfilment of Yahweh's undertakings to Jacob. He becomes the father of many sons (29:31 - 30:24) . He is a means of blessing to Laban (30:27, 30). He gains wealth and possessions despite Laban's attempted fraud and despite or through the superstitions that he and Laban seem to have shared (30:25-43). If there is a moral ambiguity about some of Abraham's acts (12:10-13; 16:2-4; 23:1-18), there is no ambiguity about the deceit and theft of the Jacob stories. Yet once more the narrative is more concerned with the conviction that these human acts were the means of Yahweh fulfilling his purpose than it is with moral judgments. Jacob's cocky assertions (31:9-13, 42) are true. God has indeed dealt graciously with him, and he has enough (33:11). Yahweh protects him from the deserved wrath of his father-in-law and turns Laban into his covenant-brother (31:17-55).

But to succeed in escaping from Laban is only to have to face Esau. The fear of Laban (31:31) is replaced by the fear of Esau (32:7, 11), despite the encouragement not to be afraid under whose protection Jacob stands (26:24, cf. 15:1). It is to the blessing that Yahweh gave Jacob as he left the land, and to the command that Yahweh gave him to return to it, that Jacob himself actually appeals at this point (32:9-12). Land and descendants are once again the focus. And when God (?) appears, Jacob insists on a blessing, and receives one (32:26, 29). Then he finds Esau gracious and welcoming rather than still harbouring revenge. But if Esau is a changed man to make sure that Yahweh's commitment to Jacob is fulfilled, Jacob (for all his changed name) is clearly still the same trickster - and this, too, is the means by which Yahweh prospers him, for Jacob not only buys his piece of land, at Shechem (33:18-20), but also finds reason and means to beat the Shechemites at their own game and to dispossess them of all they own (34:23, 27-29). Then, as the story of Isaac draws to a close, God calls Jacob back to Bethel, where he goes to build an altar

to the one who had appeared to him there in his moment of need and had kept his promise to be with him wherever he went (35:1-3), and we are again told of the renaming of Jacob as Israel and of the blessing of descendants and land (35:9-12). Like Abraham, Isaac dies with his two sons together to bury him (35:29; cf. 25:9).

The Isaac narrative, then, is by no means identical with the Abraham narrative. It is more tightly structured and less episodic, there is more irony, and it introduces fewer heroes and more villains. Yet the major themes we perceived in the Abraham narrative appear here too. It relates that Yahweh reaffirmed to Abraham's son and grandson his undertaking to bless Abraham with descendants and land and to make him a means of blessing to others, and that he kept this undertaking despite and frequently through the vagaries of those he committed himself to. This theme holds the narrative together by constituting both a thread running through it and the key motif to which the individual scenes relate.

The Story of Jacob

The Isaac story, like the Abraham story, centres on the theme of God's blessing, naturally predisposes us to look for the same theme in the Jacob story. We are not disappointed, though the latter, like the two earlier narratives, has at the same time itsown distinctiveness. As was the case with 'the Isaac narrative', to entitle the sequence 'the Jacob narrative' feels somewhat whimsical, since most of the chapters refer explicitly to the life of one of his sons rather than to Jacob himself. Yet it is clearly marked as 'the Jacob story' at its beginning and on its return to Jacob for the closing chapters (47 - 50), and, indeed, the point about the Joseph material in its context is to explain how Jacob's family came to be in Egypt. Only in 50:22b-26 is Jacob really left behind and Joseph the focus.

Like the Isaac story, the Jacob narrative is preceded by a brief account of the supplanted elder brother, which ties off that aspect of the preceding narrative (36, cf. 25:12-18). It includes the note that Esau surrenders the land to his brother (36:6-7). The further note that in contrast Jacob himself 'dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan' gains its significance from what has come before (his exile in Haran) and what will follow (his exile in Egypt).

After that, the story proper gets under way in a surprising fashion - though in this respect it again resembles the Isaac story. Like the opening summary verses of the latter, the opening summary verses here (37:2b-4, cf. 25:19b-21) lead in to an event which sets the keynote for the bulk of the story as a whole. Isaac's wife receives a word from God which defines the overall parameters for the chapters that follow; Jacob's son has a dream which reveals the parameters for the chapters that follow it (37:5-11; cf. 25:22-23 and 24-34). Although Jacob and his family respond to the dream in a way that the modern reader is tempted to see as entirely appropriate (37:8,10-11a), at the same time Jacob, the narrative implies, knows the word of God when he hears it (37:11b, cf. Rebekah's response to the word about Jacob, 25:28b). The Jacob now deceived over Joseph (37:31-35) is a softer character than the one we have met before, but the narrative's interest is not in character development from one set of stories to the next but in the function of Jacob's personality in connection with the theme announced by the dream.

Yet immediately the scene which follows the dream (37:12-36) sets up a contrast with its promise. The main theme of the story from Genesis 37 - 47 is then how Joseph's dream comes true despite and even through the affliction and humiliation brought about by the brothers who resented him, by the woman who loved him, by the master who misjudged him, and by the steward who forgot him. The theme is expressed in the patterned sequence of the story, which forms an extended narrative unparalleled in Genesis and with few equals elsewhere in the Old Testament. But it is still the Jacob story, and this is reflected in the transition of attention to Judah in chapter 38. Since Reuben, and Simeon and Levi, have disgraced themselves (34, 35:22), Judah is in a sense Jacob's senior son. Now Joseph, supposedly destined to be leader, seems to out of the way. So Judah becomes the focus for a while. Marriage and children dominate his story, as we would now expect, and the chapter ends with the birth of twin sons, of whom once again the elder is displaced by the younger (38:27-30). But this pattern affects Judah himself. The chapter's function is once again to tie off the story of a supplanted older brother by telling us of the fulfilment of the promise in the birth of his sons. It seems that Judah is disqualified from leadership by his marrying out and his recourse to an apparent prostitute: in the realm of marriage and

sex he behaves more like Reuben (and Shechem, who provoked Simeon and Levi's sin) than Joseph, as chapter 39 will now portray him.

The first verbal markers to the narrative's burden also come in chapter 39, which three times reiterates that Yahweh was with Joseph and thus he met with success (39:2, 3, 23; cf. 21). Then lo and behold, it further reiterates that Joseph was the means of bringing Yahweh's 'blessing' to his owner, Potiphar (39:5). Once a further reverse is behind him, Joseph becomes a blessing to the Pharaoh himself too (40 - 41), though the term itself does not appear. But success for the Pharaoh of course also means success for Joseph himself. This is highlighted when his brothers appear in Egypt to bow before him, and Joseph recalls the dreams with which the narrative opened (42:9). Yet the triumph which fulfils the dream has not yet been fully understood. Why has Yahweh elevated the (arrogant) Joseph in this way? Joseph himself is allowed to tell us, when the story comes to a climax as he reveals himself to his brothers. This was Yahweh's way of providing for the needs of Jacob's whole family (45:5-8).

So Jacob himself is to follow Joseph to Egypt. And immediately the familiar (yet again updated) divine undertakings made to each of the patriarchs reappear. Once more God speaks to Jacob in a vision, identifies himself, and bids Jacob not to fear to go to Egypt, because there he will make Jacob into a great nation and from there he will bring Jacob back to the promised land again (46:2-4). Whether or not Abram's journey to Egypt and Jacob's to Mesopotamia were sinful human initiatives, Jacob's journey to Egypt takes place entirely within the purpose of God. And there in Egypt Jacob blesses Pharaoh (47:7,10) and the promise of fruitfulness is kept (47:27). As Jacob's death draws near, recalling God's blessing of him, he gives a father's blessing to Joseph's sons, and as he had himself received the elder's blessing from his father so he gives it to Ephraim rather than to Manasseh (48:1-20). He passes on to Joseph (treated as his own senior son, in accordance with Joseph's dream) both the promise that God will be with him and will bring him back to the land of his fathers, and his own personal possession in the land of Shechem (48:21-22). The 'deathbed scene' is prolonged by Jacob's blessing on all his sons in chapter 49 (see 49:28), with a specific reference to blessings for Joseph (see 49:25-26), before Jacob actually dies and returns to the land himself (50:12-13). Genesis closes with Joseph's own final affirmation that the whole story we have been reading (Genesis 37 - 50) belongs

within the purpose of God to keep many people alive, despite the sins of his brothers in their part in the story (50:20), with Joseph's own final passing on of the promise of the land to 'the sons of Israel', and with his dying in living hope of sharing in the fulfilment of that promise himself (50:24-26).

It is possible, then, to read through the patriarchal narratives as a whole and perceive one clear theme linking them. The theme is explicit in the actual words of God which promise blessing, land, increase, and influence. These explicit words then form the key which explains the function in their context of the stories which make up the bulk of the narratives as a whole. These stories illustrate the theme, often by showing how God overcomes the obstacles to the fulfilment of his commitment of himself which arise from circumstances that surround those who received God's commitment or from the people that they had to deal with or from the recipients of God' s promises themselves.

The Patriarchs in the context of the exodus and conquest

The nature of the theme of Genesis 12 - 50 makes one form of link with Exodus to Joshua inevitable. God's undertaking to bless Abraham with many descendants and to give them the land of Canaan (albeit after a time away from it) is here fulfilled (see e.g. Ex. 1:7; 12:40; 13:19; 33:1; Nu. 23:10; Dt. 1:8; 9:5). The exodus happens because God remembers his covenant with the patriarchs (Ex. 2:24; 6: 2-8), and Moses' appeal to Yahweh not to cast Israel off bases itself on Yahweh's undertakings to the patriarchs (32:13; Dt. 9:27). It is for this faithfulness to his commitments that Israel is to worship Yahweh in the land (Dt. 26:3).

- As the fulfilment of God's undertakings, the exodus and the conquest form the conclusion of a story begun in the life of Abraham. This point is made by some of the narratives' geographical references. Abram first arrives in the land at Shechem (Gn. 12:6), Jacob buys land at Shechem (33:18-19) and passes this on to Joseph (48:22), and the story of the patriarchs, exodus, and conquest ends in the land where it began in an assembly of Israel at Shechem (Jos. 24), where Joseph's bones are re-interred as he had planned (24:32). The completing of the series of acts stretching from the call of Abraham to the giving of the land is then the reason why Israel serves Yahweh in the present (24:2-14; cf. Dt. 26:5-l1).

- But a second form of link between the patriarchal and the exodus-conquest narratives involves the latter picturing Israel in a position before God parallel to that portrayed in the former. God's undertakings and blessings are repeated, as well as being fulfilled and completed. This theme appears particularly clearly in the account of Israel in the plains of Moab, after her wilderness wanderings (Nu. 22 - 24). There the Moabite king sends for an Aramaean seer, Balaam, to curse Israel. But Balaam cannot do this, because Yahweh himself has declared Israel blessed. All Balaam can therefore do is bless Israel, reasserting the patriarchal promises of descendants (23:9-10), of God's active presence with them (23:21-24), of possessing a land (24:5-7), and of having kings and defeating enemies (24:17-19). There are particular verbal parallels in 24:9 with Genesis 27:29 and 49:9. The immediately following account of Israel's worship of Moabite gods (Nu. 25:1-5), however, illustrates the obstacles to the fulfilment of this blessing, as the patriarchal stories often do.
- The theme of blessing is further reaffirmed in Moses's address to Israel in Moab in the book of Deuteronomy, and the blessing is often specified here as involving increase in numbers and enjoyment of the land. Moses urges Israel to obey Yahweh's commands because then she will experience these blessings (e.g. 7:13; 30:16), he prays for further fulfilment of God's promises (26:15), he looks forward to the worship Israel will offer when she does experience them (e.g. 16:15), and he makes Yahweh's blessing the standard for Israel's generosity to others (15:14). The theme of blessing (and curse, if she disobeys) is particularly prominent in Moses's closing exhortation (chapters 27 - 28). Other specific parallels with patriarchal promises appear in the closing chapters of Deuteronomy. Moses promises that Yahweh will be with Israel as he was with Jacob (31:6-8; cf. Gn. 28:15). He blesses the twelve tribes as Jacob had (33:1-29, cf. Gn. 49:1-28), acknowledging Joseph's dominion foreshadowed in his dream (33:13-17; cf. Gn. 37:8; 49:22-26; there is another particular verbal parallel in 33:13 with Gn. 27:28). On the other hand, we are now the other side of the fulfilment of many of the patriarchal promises, while the remaining fulfilment is imminent. Israel is thus in a new situation before God, enjoying a covenant relationship that was promised to the patriarchs and may be regarded as foreshadowed by the

patriarchal covenant, yet one which was not actually fully experienced by the fathers (Dt. 4:31; 5:2-3; 29:10-15). Deuteronomy thus emphasizes the obligations that follow from actually experiencing the covenant relationship, the blessings of Yahweh, the fulfilled promises. The patriarchal promises, addressed to people for whom the blessings are future, make little reference to such obligations. Deuteronomy stresses the commitment to Yahweh which must be the people's response to their experience of the commitment of Yahweh if the blessing is to abide.

- The parallel between Israel's relationship with God during the patriarchal period and at the time of the exodus is expressed theologically in both narratives. On the one hand, the God of the patriarchs is referred to as Yahweh, although this actual name may not have been known until the exodus period. On the other hand, the God of the exodus is identified as 'the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob' (Ex. 3:16). The parallel is also expressed typologically in Genesis 12:10 - 13:2. Abram 'goes down' into Egypt as Jacob's family later would and 'goes up' from Egypt as the Israelites would, 'plundering the Egyptians' in the process.
- In the context of the exodus-conquest narrative, then, the patriarchal narrative appears both as an instructive parallel to what living before God means for Israel in that later period, and also as the beginning of a story which will be completed then and the giving of an undertaking which will be fulfilled then. The people's place in Canaan is explained by Yahweh's promise of blessing to their fathers and by the sin of those who lived in the land before them. They were promised and given the land by God himself.

Footnotes

1. The word *elohim* is the word for "God." The first chapter of Genesis says that God made man. The second chapter says *yahweh (YHVH) elohim*, the God who is the Saviour God, the God who makes covenants with man is Creator. *Yahweh (YHVH)* is the self-existant God, always has been and always will be. Most scholars think *yahweh (YHVH)* is taken from the verb "to be."
2. Perhaps this is where the idea of "Mother Earth" originated. Nations the world over speak of "Father Heaven" and "Mother Earth." For a beautifully written, inspiring treatise on this subject see: James L. Kelso's chapter "Man's Closest Relative is God," in *Archaeology and the Ancient Testament*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan (1968).

Chapter 5

Book of Exodus

The Book of Exodus or, simply, Exodus (from Greek - îïäïò, exodos, meaning "going out"; Hebrew: ùîåúý, Sh'mot, "Names"), is the second book of the Hebrew Bible, and of the five books of the Torah (the Pentateuch).The book tells how the children of Israel leave slavery in Egypt through the strength of Yahweh, the God who has chosen Israel as his people. Led by Moses they journey through the wilderness to Mount Sinai, where Yahweh promises them the land of Canaan (the "Promised Land") in return for their faithfulness. Israel enters into a covenant with Yahweh who gives them their laws and instructions for the Tabernacle, the means by which he will dwell with them and lead them to the land, and give them peace.

Structure of Exodus

Part 1: In Egypt serving Pharaoh - Deliverance from slavery (1-12)

A Death of Israelite males - rescue of Israelite males (1)

B Rescue of Moses out of the water at the reeds of the Nile (2:1-10)

C Suffering and rescue (2:11-25), Israel suffering, Moses challenged by fellow Israelite, Moses provides water, Jethro and family, God hears cry of his people

D Moses at Sinai – God appears (3-4)

E Moses and the elders worship God (4:29-31)

F God speaks through Moses to Pharaoh (5-11)

G Passover (12)

Part **2: In the wilderness and at the mountain serving God – Deliverance from sin (13-40)**

A Death of the firstborn male - rescue of the firstborn male (13)

B Rescue of Israel out of the water at the Sea of Reeds (14-15:21)

C Suffering and rescue (15:22-18:27), Israel suffering, Moses challenged by fellow Israelites, God/Moses provide water, Jethro and family, God hears cry of his people

D Israel at Sinai - God appears (19-23)

E Moses and the elders worship God (24:1-11)

F God speaks through Moses to Israel (24:12-39) Building project of God, Rebellion of Israel - hard neck

G Setting up of the Tabernacle (40) On the first of the month Moses did as the Lord had commanded him, thus he did. Significance: the structure alerts the reader to several things the author wants to highlight:

✓ Contrast between service to Pharaoh and service to God. The first section focuses on Israel's time in Egypt serving Pharaoh. The second section focuses on Israel's time in the wilderness and at the mountain serving God. The service to Pharaoh is bondage. The service to God is freedom. Pharaoh commands the Israelite males to be killed. God commands the firstborn to be killed but then provides a way out by way of redemption.

✓ The building project of Pharaoh is for his own glory and is made possible through hard labor. The building project of God is so that he can dwell among his people and is made possible through free-will offerings. Pharaoh oppresses, God rescues. In the end Pharaoh is powerless against God.

- ✓ The story of Moses foreshadows the story of Israel. He is rescued from the water just as Israel is rescued from the water. He flees from Pharaoh just as Israel flees from Pharaoh. He meets God at Sinai just as Israel meets God at Sinai. As Moses had to learn patience and trust in the wilderness so Israel had to learn patience and trust in the wilderness. As one who has gone the way before them he is perfectly equipped to lead them on the same journey. In this way he foreshadows Christ (the prophet like Moses) who led his people on another Exodus out of the slavery of sin.
- ✓ In both panels there is a movement from imminent death to rescue to worship through ritual. The order is important: first God rescues then he asks people to worship him in a way that symbolizes and commemorates the rescue. In both panels there is rebellion and counter worship. Pharaoh refuses to worship God, Israel worships another god. In both cases there is judgment, yet only those who stubbornly refuse to side with God end up losing their life.
- ✓ The connection between slavery and sin. In the first panel God appears at Sinai and speaks to Pharaoh in order to take care of the slavery problem. In the second panel God appears at Sinai and speaks to Israel in order to take care of the sin problem. Thus the Exodus from slavery becomes an illustration for the Exodus from sin. This also shows that God is interested in more than simply getting his people out of Egypt. In the end, he wants to take care of their sin problem. The solution is provided in the climax of each of the two panels: through the Passover where God spares his people because of the blood of the lamb and through the tabernacle which illustrates the process of salvation.
- ✓ In both panels God reveals himself: to Moses, to Pharaoh, to the Egyptians, to Israel. He appears to Moses at Sinai and to Israel at Sinai. He speaks to and through Moses throughout the whole book. He thus reveals himself both through words and through actions. The book climaxes in the building of the Tabernacle so that God may dwell among his people and thus reveal himself most fully. At the same time God reveals himself through Moses who passes on to Pharaoh and to Israel what God has told him.

The Historicity of the Exodus

It is a pillar of OT theology that the Exodus was an historic event, and that it took place in the manner described in the Bible.

Nevertheless, the historic period during which the Egyptian exile took place remains a matter of considerable debate. Based on the archeological evidence in Israel, many archeologists favor an early 13th century BC dating for the Exodus. The people who argue for the historicity of the exodus event puts forward the following arguments:

1. Exoduses happened in the second millennium BC, and the Israelite one is widely attested and strongly emphasised in the Hebrew Bible.
2. Israel, Edom and Moab are all mentioned in Egyptian sources shortly before 1200. We know that they existed, and were known to Egypt, at that time.
3. Semites and others are known to have been present in the cosmopolitan Ramesside Nineteenth Dynasty, from the court of the Pharaoh down to slaves.
4. The biblical narratives contain all sorts of realistic details that could not have been invented in Jerusalem or Babylon centuries later: salt-tolerant reeds, water from rock, habits of quails, *kewirs*, and so on.
5. The instruction not to go north to Canaan fits perfectly with Egyptian presence in the area in the thirteenth century BC.
6. "The tabernacle is an ancient Semitic concept, here with Egyptian technology involved, all from pre-1000, even centuries earlier."
7. The content and shape of the Sinai covenant fit the late second millennium BC, as a comparison with firsthand sources shows, rather than covenants many centuries later.
8. Slaves who made bricks would not have shaped a covenant or treaty like the Sinai one; the story demands an educated, court-level diplomat to have put the whole thing together. Thus "we would be obliged to invent a Moses if one were not already available."
9. Based on the archeological evidence in Israel, many archeologists and Biblical scholars favor 13th century BC as the date of exodus, during the reign of Pharaoh Rameses II of the 19th dynasty. His father Seti I possibly was the Pharaoh of the oppression. Rameses II was ruler from 1279 to1213 BC based

on the low chronology or 1304 to 1237 BC based on the high chronology. He was the grandson of Rameses I. Rameses II established the city of Pi–Rameses (meaning House of Rameses) in the Nile Delta as his new capital and residence, this city being built on the remains of the Hyksos city of Avaris. This new, or more accurately rebuilt city, would have been close to Israelite settlement. Many Biblical scholars identify *Rameses* of the Bible with the Egyptian city of Pi-Rameses. The Book of Exodus relates that "*they (the people) built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Rameses.*" (Ex 1:11). There are Jewish scholars who favor Rameses II because his rule is more in accord with Jewish dating.

Themes and Theology of the Book of Exodus

The book of Exodus moves from slavery to worship, from Israel's bondage to Pharaoh to its bonding to Yahweh. Exodus advances from an oppressive situation in which God's presence is hardly noted in the text to God's filling the scene at the completion of the tabernacle. In between these bookends of Exodus is an amazing range of activity, from plagues to sea walls to wilderness wanderings to fiery mountains and golden calves. The nonhuman order gets caught up in these occasions as much as do people. God becomes engaged in events in a way not often paralleled in the Old Testament. The people of Israel are the focus of all of this activity, but God's purposes are creation-wide: "that my name may be declared throughout all the earth" (Ex 9:16).

A Theology of God in Creation

Until recently, the interpretation of Exodus has been almost exclusively concerned with the theme of redemption, so much so that standard introductions to the Old Testament often start at this point. The theme of creation is often ignored or noticed only occasionally (e.g., in the tabernacle texts). The book of Exodus is shaped in a decisive way by a creation theology. This will be recognized in the book's verbal, thematic, and structural concerns. Generally, God's work in creation provides the basic category and interpretive clues for what happens in redemption and related divine activity. It is the Creator God who redeems Israel from Egypt. God's work in creation has

been shown to life-giving, life-preserving, and life-blessing (e.g., 1:7, 12, 20). What God does in redemption is in the service of these endangered divine goals in and for the creation. For example, the hymnic celebration of that redemptive act in Exodus 15 is permeated with creation talk, in terms of vocabulary, structure, and theme. Not only is an experience of God's work as creator necessary for participation in the exodus - otherwise there would be no people to redeem, an understanding of God's work as creator is indispensable for the proper interpretation of what happens - there would be no exodus *as we know it* without its having been informed by that understanding.

- **A creation theology provides the *cosmic purpose* behind God's redemptive activity on Israel's behalf.** While the liberation of Israel is the focus of God's activity, it is not the ultimate purpose. The deliverance of Israel is ultimately for the sake of all creation (see 9:16). The issue for God is finally not that God's name be made known in Israel but that it be declared to the entire earth. God's purpose in these events is creation-wide. What is at stake is God's mission for the world, for as 9:29 and 19:5 put it, "All the earth is God's" (cf. 8:22; 9:14). Hence the *public character* of these events is an important theme throughout.
- **God's redemptive activity is set in terms of a *creational need.*** The fulfillment of God's creational purposes in the growth of Israel is endangered by Pharaoh's attempted subversion thereof. If Pharaoh succeeds in his anti-life purposes at that point at which God has begun to actualize the promise of creation (1:7-14), then God's purposes in creation are subverted and God's creational mission will not be able to be realized. God's work in redemption, climaxing in Israel's crossing of the sea on "dry land," constitutes God's efforts at re-creation, returning creation to a point where God's mission can once again be taken up.
- **God's redemptive activity is *cosmic in its effects*.** Generally, the Lord of heaven and earth is active throughout Exodus, from acts of blessing to the use of the nonhuman creation in the plagues, the sea crossing, the wilderness wanderings, and the Sinai theophany. More specifically, Exodus 15 confesses that God's victory at the sea is not simply a local or historical phenomenon but a cosmic one. God's defeat of the powers of chaos results not

simply in Israel's liberation but in the reign of God over the entire cosmos (15:18).

- **God's calling of Israel is given *creation-wide scope*.** The theme of "All the earth is God's" is picked up again in 19:4-6, a divine invitation to Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Israel is called out from among other nations and commissioned to a task on behalf of God's earth. Israel is to function among the nations as a priest functions in a religious community. Israel's witness to God's redemptive activity (see 18:8-12) and its obedience of the law are finally for the sake of a universal mission.

The redemptive deeds of God are not an end in themselves. The experience of those events propels the people out into various creational spheres of life. Redemption is for the purpose of the creation, a new life within the larger creation, a return to the world as God intended it to be.

A creation theology is also built into the structure of the book, seen not least in the parallels between Exodus and Genesis 1-9: (a) a creational setting (cf. 1:7 with Gen. 1:28); (b) anticreational activity (cf. chaps. 1-2, 5 with Gen. 3-6); (c) Noah and Moses (see at 2:1; 25:1; 33:12); (d) the flood and the plagues as ecological disasters (see at 7:8); (e) death and deliverance in and through water, with cosmic implications (see at 15:1); (j) covenant with Noah/ Abraham and at Sinai with commitment and signs (see at 24:1; cf. 31:17); and (g) the restate-ment of the covenant (see at 34:9). Chapters 25-40 may be viewed in terms of a creation, fall, re-creation structure. The commentary will explore these elements in greater detail.

The Knowledge of God

The book of Exodus is concerned in a major way with the knowledge of Yahweh. Ironically, Pharaoh sets this question: Who is Yahweh? (5:2). The pursuit of this question is primarily undertaken by God: "that you may know that I am Yahweh." The object of this divine quest includes Pharaoh and the Egyptians (7:17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29; 11:7; 14:4, 18) as well as Israel (10:2; 29:46). God's concern for self-disclosure is thus not confined to Israel; it includes the world (see 18:8-12). The exodus events are not, however, the only medium for this knowledge. In God's first words in Exodus, the divine self-

identification is as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (3:6; cf. 3:13-16; 4:5; 6:3-8), and the covenant with them is a primary motivating factor in what God is about to do (2:24). Whatever its historical foundations, the narrator claims that this electing and promising activity of God constitutes an important element in the identity of Yahweh.

Moreover, the text testifies that God's personal disclosure to Moses (chaps. 3-6), in what might be termed an internal event, decisively shapes the interpretation of the events. The significance of the exodus is made available to Moses prior to its occurrence; it is thus not understood as an inference drawn from an experience of the event. Even more, while the initiative with respect to the divine identity lies with God, Moses' persistent inquiries into the divine name and other matters draw God out and consequently more knowledge becomes available. The experience of the event itself, of course, enhances the understanding of what occurs. Yahweh also defines himself in other speeches to Israel and Moses (e.g., 20:2). In fact, the profound self-identification in 34:6-7 is revealed in a personal way in the wake of Israel's apostasy!

This suggests the following typology for the understanding of revelation in Exodus: (1) the faith heritage of the community; (2) God's specific disclosure to and interaction with Moses; (3) the experience of the event itself; and (4) Moses' interpretation of the event to Israel and to others (see 18:8).

It is apparent from this "divine economy" that human agents are of central importance. Their character and abilities make a difference, not only to Israel but to God. Exodus is concerned throughout with the proper role and reputation of such persons, not least the nature of their relationship with both God and people. Moses is obviously the primary individual in view, but the texts seem to reflect a concern for a more general theology of leadership (or, we might say, ministry).

Images for God

Exodus presents God as one highly engaged in the events of which it speaks, though a more unobtrusive, behind-the--scenes activity is evident in chapters 1-2; 5; and 18. Images of sovereignty [that is, God's governance of the world] are certainly prominent. God as lord is evident in the proclamation of the law and the call to obedience; God as judge is experienced by both Egyptians and Israelites; God's

kingship is explicitly affirmed in 15:18; God as warrior is professed at the Red Sea (15:3); and God as ruler of heaven and earth is manifest in all of God's activity in the nonhuman order.

Nevertheless, the nature of the divine sovereignty seems to be differently conceived depending on whether the nonhuman or the human order is in view. God seems to work in the nonhuman order at will; God meets no resistance there. At the same time, God does not act in nature independent of the created order of being. That is, God's work in nature is not arbitrary; it is congruent with nature's way of being and in coordination with human activity (see at 7:8).

Human beings, however, have sufficient freedom and power to be resistant to the word and will of God. God must contend with intransigence [that is, a stubborn refusal to cooperate], cruelty, and disloyalty in the human order. Positively, a stress on divine suffering and divine dependence on the human means that God is portrayed in terms other than absolute rule or control. These factors will mean that common understandings of sovereignty are subverted and redefined.

The book of Exodus is enclosed by speeches of divine self--portrayal (3:7-10; 34:6-7; cf. 2:23-25). The first is program-matic: the God who acts in the narrative is understood to be the kind of God portrayed here. God's sovereignty is evident in the divine initiative, the setting of the agenda, the will to deliver Israel, and the announced ability to accomplish this. Alongside this, however, are images not commonly associated with sovereignty. It is a divine sovereignty qualified by divine suffering, by a divine move of compassion, that enters deeply into the suffering of the people (see at 3:7). This is congruent with one of the last speeches of God in Exodus (34:6-7). Here the divine self-portrayal is sharply oriented toward images of grace, love, and mercy. Because this or a similar statement recurs in all corners of the canon, it has a creedal status; it may be said to be a statement about God toward which the entire Exodus narrative is driving.

In addition, any definition of divine sovereignty must take into account the fact that God does not act alone in these events. The opening chapters set this divine mode in place (see at 1:15; 2:1). God works in and through five lowly women to carry out the divine purpose.

Ironically, they prove to be highly effective against ruthless forms of power, but choosing such human vehicles means that God works in unobtrusive, unlikely, and vulnerable ways.

Moses is also an instance of such a divine way. Both God and Moses are the subject of the exodus (see at 3:8, 10; cf. 6:13, 26-27; 32:7). God depends on Moses in carrying out the tasks involved and hence must work in and through Moses' frailties as well as strengths. This means that God gives up total control of the ensuing events; this is for God a risky venture, fraught with negative possibilities. For example, in the face of Moses' resistance, God adapts the original plan and chooses Aaron to be a co-leader rather than overpowering Moses. God is angry at this development (see at 4:14) but goes with what is possible, even though it is less than the best (witness Aaron's later failure as a leader in chap. 32). Another dialogue between Moses and God in chapters 32-34 shows again how God is responsive to what Moses has to say. In view of Moses' prayer, God reverses himself with respect to the announced judgment on an apostate people (see at 32:14). More generally, one might cite how God takes the context into account in making decisions and charting directions (see at 13:17-21; 2:23-25). (On God and Pharaoh, see the excursus at 7:3).

Certainly these images focus on one major concern of Exodus: Who will finally be recognized as the sovereign one, Yahweh or Pharaoh? Whom will Israel serve? But an oft-forgotten parallel issue is: What kind of sovereignty is being exercised? Pharaoh's and Yahweh's ways of being sovereign are contrasted in the narrative (cf. 3:7-10 with 5:5-18). The force of these texts is that Yahweh's sovereignty is qualified by suffering images, while Pharaoh's is not. It is Pharaoh who is the unmoved mover; he chooses to intensify Israel's oppression rather than identify with those who suffer. The God of Israel is a suffering sovereign.

The Meaning of Liberation and Exodus as Paradigm

For centuries the exodus has functioned as a paradigm, especially for those who have been victimized by oppressive systems of one kind or another. God is the champion of the poor and those pushed to the margins of life; God is one who liberates them from the pharaohs of this world. As God acted then, so God can be expected to act

again. In the United States, Negro spirituals have carried on these Exodus themes, and Black Theology is permeated with them. In the last generation, South American and other liberation theologians have also considered the exodus to be paradigmatic for their reflections on the experience of oppression. The exodus is not believed to stand alone as a biblical foundation for such a theological perspective, but it is the generative event. Numerous texts from both Testaments are un-derstood to stand in this tradition, from the prophets to the Psalms to the Gospels (cf. I Sam. 2:1-10; Luke 1:46-55).

In such formulations, this liberating activity of God is often believed to be explicitly political. God's salvific activity is directed not just toward internal change but toward societal change, the external conditions of life. Salvation is thus conceived in holistic terms as the work of God affecting change in all aspects of life: religious and political, social and individual. Perhaps above all, the exodus is seen to be a sign of hope that poverty and oppression are not the last word, for God is at work on behalf of a different future. Those who interpret the book of Exodus must take time to listen to these interpretations from the "underside" of life, whatever they might think about liberation theology; these people have a clearer sense than most of what oppression is like. The commentary will draw on such reflections particularly concerning chapters 1 and 5.

This way in which Israel's liberation has been interpreted has not gone uncontested, however. There are at least three difficulties with many such interpretations.

1. It has been objected that the people of Israel do not engage in military or other violent revolutionary activity to initiate or ensure their escape, even though they are armed and could have done so (13:18). It is highly precarious to suggest that an earlier stage of the tradition had them doing battle. Even if they did do so, the final stage of the redaction sets it aside. In fact, Israel is expressly forbidden to engage in such activity; Israel is to watch and "see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today." It is only God who does the fighting, as recognized by both Israelites and Egyptians (14:13-14, 25; 15:3-12). All the violence comes from God working in and through various aspects of the nonhuman order. The end result is not a takeover of Egypt but a withdrawal to another land; Exodus is not a journey that begins and ends at home.

It may be said, and this is no small matter, that Moses engages in deception (3:18; 5:1-3) and is bluntly confrontational in his approach to the authorities. The civil disobedience of the midwives and Moses' mother may also be cited (see at 1:15; 2:1); so may Moses' killing of the Egyptian, though that functions to prefigure *divine* activity (see at 2:11). Such Israelite actions may certainly be said to be subversive, and they do prepare the way for what God does.

Above all, it is God's activity that can serve as a paradigm. The exodus is a powerful symbol that the present situation does not define what is possible for God. With God, change and newness are likely possibilities. Moreover, there can be no doubt that Israel's God is deeply engaged on behalf of Israel's counterparts in every age and that their liberation from bondage to oppressive systems is a high divine priority from which they can take hope. Israel's own typological use of God's actions in the exodus can help show the way (e.g., Isa. 41:17-20; 43:14-21; 52.11-12). At the same time, the interpreter must use care so as not to lose sight of the fact that God's actions in the exodus are on behalf of a very particular elect people, the people of Israel.

2. From another perspective, while there can be little doubt salvation is understood in a holistic way in Exodus, political interpretations have often ignored other dimensions of the event. The identity of the anti-God forces in the narrative is a matter of no little import in this regard. Pharaoh is not simply another tyrant, and the event is more than historical. The text makes clear that God's activity is also directed against Egypt's gods (12:12; 15:11; 18:11). Pharaoh is seen to be both a human being and an embodiment of cosmic forces working against God's creational designs. Redemption is thus both mythically and historically conceived and hence is universal in scope. The historical redemption is real and con-stitutive in character because it participates in a cosmic victory. To interpret salvation in sociopolitical terms only or primarily scales down the import and effect of what happens at the Red Sea (see at 15:1-21).

The exodus redemption finds its closest parallels in the victory announced by Second Isaiah and in the cross and resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament. It would then need to be asked whether the image of God as warrior has not in these instances been transmuted

to such an extent that sociopolitical violence is now problematic in talk about the redemption that God works (see the article by Zenger in van Iersel).

3. Finally, it must be remembered that the book of Exodus insists that one cannot speak of liberation as a freeing from all restraints; it is not a declaration of independence. As we have noted, Exodus moves from one kind of slavery to another, from bondage to Pharaoh to the service of Yahweh. One cannot bypass Sinai on the way to the promised land. Hence, any who would use Exodus as a paradigm for liberation should then move to the question, Whom will we now serve? Exodus would claim that true freedom is found only in the service of Yahweh.

These factors suggest that the exodus ought not function as a paradigm in any direct or simple way.

Israel's Worship and Yahweh's Presence

Worship is a central theme of Exodus. The overall move-ment of the book is from slavery to worship. The concern for the proper worship of Yahweh is also evident throughout the book, seen both in specific content and in the fact that liturgical usage of this material has shaped the literature.

Worship themes are made especially prominent by the redactional [or, editorial] placement of the passover ritual and the songs of chapter 15. Their enclosure of the exodus story gives it a liturgical character, contributing to a sacramental understanding of the events and their commanded reactualizations. Liturgy and narrative are interconnected (see at 12:1). The centrality of praise in chapter 15 has also been closely tied to the lament character of earlier chapters. This rhythm of lament, deliverance, and praise is shown by the psalms to be a common liturgical rhythm in Israel's worship. This suggests a liturgical character for the entirety of chapters 1-15. Their interpretation cannot be separated from the meaning given to these events in the life of worship.

Worship themes continue in the eating and drinking of the wilderness, and especially at Sinai. The Sinai events of theophany, law-giving and covenant-making, perhaps shaped by subsequent liturgIcal reactualizations, are permeated with worship themes

and concerns. Chapters 25-40 are obvious in their explicit worship focus. Most of this material centers on the plan and construction of the tabernacle, the worship center of the community. Between the planning and the building, however, come chapters 32-34. At issue in the apostasy of the golden calf and its aftermath is the proper worship of Yahweh.

The question of Exodus thus becomes not only, Whom will Israel serve? but, Of what does the proper worship of Yahweh consist? Certain negative possibilities are rejected, while positive directions are encouraged and commanded. Proper worship is understood to have both sacrificial and sacramental dimensions. On the one hand, it is a means by which Israel can bring public honor to its God through praise, thanksgiving, and other expressions of faithfulness (see at 15:1). On the other hand, it is a means in and through which God can act in faithfulness on behalf of those who worship (see at 12:1).

Closely related to this is the movement in Exodus from seeming divine absence to the fullness of presence in the tabernacle. Especially following the golden calf incident, the divine presence with the people becomes the central problematic. Will God go with Israel on its journeyings or not (33:1-3)? Finally, after the planning and building of the tabernacle, God in all the divine glory does dwell among the people (40:35). It is apparent that what Israel does and says in worship has an effect on the nature of the divine presence in its midst. God will be faithful, but Israel can drive Yahweh away by its disloyalty. Israel's faithfulness in worship is seen to be absolutely central to its life as the people of God.

Law, Covenant, and Israel's Identity

The identity of the Israelites is of considerable interest to the narrator. Over the course of the narrative they are more and more revealed for who they are, both positively and negatively. Unlike Genesis, Exodus has to do, not with the family of Jacob, but with *a people*, the people of Israel. This change in identity is established in the opening verses, and in God's first speech ("my people," 3:7). Israel's status as God's elect people is in place from the beginning. They are the people of the covenant made with Abraham; the promises to Abraham are also their promises (2:24). Peoplehood is the presupposition of these events, not the result. The narrative is

concerned with how these people more and more take on their identity, becoming in life what they already are in the eyes of God.

The Theology of the Passover

I want to set before you the five key words in which the theology of the story of the Passover may be expressed, for remember that we are trying to trace the theological grain in the narrative.

(a) **Propitiation**. The chosen setting for the Passover is a setting of divine judgment, a setting of the wrath of God. This is a true covenant setting, for this was the setting of God's dealings with Noah. God purposes to come wrathfully into the land of Egypt. He says so in chapter 12 verse 12: 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and I will smite...'. God is coming in in judgment. And any Israelite who was abroad that night, having failed to heed the Passover regulations, is implicated: the fact that he is an Israelite does not exempt him. The teaching of verse 23 makes that clear: 'For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he sees the blood upon the lintel and on the two side posts the LORD will pass over the door, and will not allow the destroyer to come into your houses.' So apart from the Passover blood, the destroyer would enter. All alike are under the wrath of God that night. Nevertheless it says in that key verse 13, 'The blood shall be to you a token upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over'. Not 'when I see you', but 'when I see the blood, I will pass over.' The blood is a token to me that you are there; but it is 'when I see the blood that I will pass over'. Putting the matter bluntly, there is something about the blood which changes God. The God who comes in in wrath looks upon that household with absolute satisfaction. There is nothing there to move him to wrath any more, and he passes by. That is the truth which is safeguarded by the word 'propitiation', that which appeases divine wrath. There is something about that blood which appeases the wrath of God, so that wrath is no longer operative against that household. No other word but 'propitiation' will do. There is no reference in this narrative to any subjective state of the people of God, and therefore words like 'expiation', which signify the wiping away of sin in the heart of man, will not suffice. For the narrative takes no notice of subjective factors in the people of God. It simply says, 'God is coming in his wrath; when he sees the blood he passes by in peace.' It is therefore the blood of propitiation.

(b) **Security** or salvation. As long as the people remain where the blood has been shed, they are secure. Verse 22 reads, 'Ye shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood in the bason; and none of you shall go out of the door of this house.' There is no safety except there; there, there is safety (v. 23). When he sees the blood the Lord will pass over and will not suffer the destroyer to enter. The people of God are secure from destruction while they shelter in the place where the blood has been shed. So the blood has a manward movement. God-ward it works propitiation, manward security.

(c) ***Substitution***. Is there any clue in the narrative as to why the blood has such amazing efficacy that it can propitiate a wrathful God and that it can secure a people who well merit that wrath? What is the inner secret of the efficaciousness of the blood of the lamb? We can see the answer to this most clearly if we remind ourselves that the judgment of God was in terms of death. He came in to slay, and the judgment of God was going to take a token but dreadful form in the death of the firstborn of the family. The judgment of God was in terms of death; but a death had taken place in every Israelite's house already. The narrative is perhaps more truthful than the narrator intended when he says in verse 30: 'There was not a house where there was not one dead' - in every Egyptian household the death of a firstborn, in every Israelite household the death of the lamb. In every house there was a corpse - in the Egyptian house the corpse of the firstborn, in the Israelite house the corpse of the lamb which had been reverently carried into the house. We cannot resist the word substitution; for there was a death in every house, and in the houses of Israel it was the lamb that had died. The narrative rubs our noses in the exact equivalence of that lamb to the people of God. See verse 3: 'In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household: and if the household be too little for a lamb, then shall he and his neighbour next unto his house take one according to the number of the souls; according to every man's appetite ye shall make your count for the lamb.' This is not just a broad equivalence - a lamb for a household; no, they must count heads and then stomachs. Count the number of people and then say how much they will eat, so that the lamb represents exactly the number and the needs of the people of God. And the

narrative caters for human fallibility in this matter, in case they may overestimate; it says 'If anything remains till the morning, burn it with fire' for there is to be no other use or significance for this lamb than that it has represented the number and needs of the people of God, That was the lamb that died; that was the precious blood under which they had sheltered, the lamb that was exact in its measurement to the measurement of the number and needs of the people of God. If that's not substitution, then you must be very hard to please! But you may be mathematically inclined, and you may say 'Ah, but in the houses of Egypt none died but the firstborn son; and therefore if the lamb had not been offered, none would have died but the firstborn son in the houses of Israel; therefore at most the lamb substituted for the firstborn sons'. But have you forgotten that when God committed himself to propositional revelation to Moses, he said, 'Thus shall thou say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, my firstborn'? The lamb is equivalent to the firstborn of God.

(d) ***Deliverance***, o**r accomplished redemption.** The death of the lamb did not make redemption possible for the people of God; it made redemption actual and inevitable. Redemption was accomplished by the death of the lamb. You may put the matter this way without any shaping of the narrative: before the lamb died they could not go; after the lamb died they could not stay. We read that the Egyptians were urgent upon them to make them leave. The death of the lamb effected redemption. That is why, incidentally, through the remainder of the Old Testament the focus of attention is often on the Red Sea and what happened there rather than upon the Passover lamb in Egypt, because it was the event of the Red Sea that sealed finally that which God had done in the land of Egypt. God manœuvred his people into a corner, the sea on one side and the Egyptians on the other, and there was that great word which Holy Scripture always speaks to people who have not yet entered into the fullness of redemption: 'Stand still and see the salvation of God.' And the waters opened before them and they went through; the Egyptians trying to follow were drowned; and they saw the Egyptians dead on the sea shore. 'Then they believed God' (Exodus 14). Then they knew for certain that they were redeemed from the land of Egypt and that their bondage was finished and done with; the redemption had been accomplished and applied.

(e) **Pilgrimage** The Passover was the supper to be eaten as a breakfast. Exodus 12: 11 reads: 'Thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S Passover.' Why do we eat it in haste? Because it is the Lord's Passover, because there is that about it which demands that you eat it as those who are already committed to pilgrimage. You can't eat the Lord's Passover and live in Egypt. You can only eat the Lord's Passover if you have made a free commitment to go walking with God in pilgrimage out of this place wherever he shall lead you. So the Passover begins to be the fulfilment of the word which God spoke to Abraham, 'Walk before me and be thou perfect'. There has to be the walk with God. The people who went into safety through that door plastered with the blood of the lamb came out through the same bloodstained door into pilgrimage. The blood which ushered them into safety ushered them out to walk with God, and they had to eat it as those who were committed to that pilgrimage endeavour.

Chapter 6

Book of Levitcus

The Book of Leviticus (from Greek *Leuitikos*, meaning "relating to the Levites"; Hebrew: *Vayikra*/ *Wayikra*, "And He called") is the third book of the Hebrew Bible, and of the Torah (or Pentateuch). The English name is from the Latin *Leviticus*, taken in turn from Greek and a reference to theLevites, the tribe from whom the priests were drawn. In addition to instructions for those priests, it also addresses the role and duties of the laity. The Book of Leviticus, like all the other books of the Pentateuch, is anonymous, having no explicit indication of authorship. While the text makes it abundantly clear that the Law was given to Israel through Moses (see, for example, the many statements "Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, 4:1;5:14; 6:1, 8; etc.), nowhere does it ever state that Moses wrote down what he heard. In view of Scriptural support for Mosaic authorship for whole of the Pentateuch, and in view of the intimately close association of Leviticus with the Book of Exodus where it explicitly states that Moses wrote down all that Yahweh said (Ex 24:4), it is reasonable to assume Mosaic

authorship of Leviticus. The Book of Leviticus is specifically addressed to the sons of Israel (see, for example, 1:2; 4:2; 7:23; and 11:2), and Aaron and his descendants (6:9; and 8:2). In view of the fact that the covenant Israel entered into was not just for the Exodus generation, but for all succeeding generations, Moses' wider audience must necessarily include later generations of Israelites as well.

Time of Composition

There are no chronological indicators in the Book of Leviticus and so the date of the events in this book must be determined from chronological data given in other books of the Pentateuch. The Book of Leviticus begins with "Then Yahweh called to Moses and spoke to him from within the tent of meeting, saying, . . . "(1:1). This statement shows strong continuity with the Book of Exodus with then connecting the instructions of Leviticus with the closing of Exodus (Ex 40:34-38). From this perspective, it is known from Ex 40:17 that the Tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month of the second year from the Exodus. Further, it is known from the Book of Numbers that Yahweh spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai from in the Tent of Meeting on the first day of the second month of the second year (Num 1:1). This would date the giving of the instructions recorded in Leviticus in the first month of the second year from the Exodus, or in the Spring of the year 1445 B.C. (assuming a date of 1446 B.C. for the Exodus as argued for in the Introduction to the Pentateuch). Thus it would seem, that the giving of the Law recorded in the Book Leviticus occurred over a one month period of time.

Assuming Mosaic authorship, the Book of Leviticus would have to have been written sometime between the beginning of the second year from the Exodus and the end of the fortieth year when Moses died (Dt 34:5-7) - sometime between 1445 and 1406 B.C. More likely, Moses would have immediately written down the instructions from Yahweh as he had received them, even as he did for the instructions recorded in the Book of Exodus (Ex 24:4). Assuming this to be the case, Leviticus could have been written as early as 1445 B.C.

Relationship with the Book of Exodus

The close relationship between the books of Exodus and Leviticus is seen in terms of their historical and theological relationships.

- Historical Relationship: The Book of Leviticus is, from a historical perspective, a sequel to, or, more likely, a continuation of, the Book of Exodus (Lindsey 1985:163). This evident in several ways. First, the Levitical sacrificial system was a divine revelation to Israel through Moses as a part of the covenant obligation given at Sinai. In this sense it completes the revelation given in Exodus which details the Tabernacle in terms of its component parts and its construction. Leviticus completes this revelation by informing Israel the function of the Tabernacle in their covenant-relationship with Yahweh. Further, the Book of Leviticus opens with Yahweh calling to Moses from within the now completed Tabernacle (1:1). Thus the laws of sacrifice, worship, and holiness contained in Leviticus follows the historical narrative concerning the construction of the Tabernacle (Ex 25-40), and the subsequent indwelling of Yahweh in the Tabernacle (Exod 40:34-35). A consideration of Exodus 40:2, 17, and Numbers 1:1 and 10:11 indicates that the events of the Book of Leviticus took place over a period of one month, during which time Israel remained at Sinai. Therefore, historically, chronologically, and, as next discussed, theologically, Leviticus correctly follows Exodus and precedes Numbers.

- Theological Relationship: The Levitical sacrificial system was instituted by God for a people he had redeemed from Egypt at the time of the Passover and brought into covenant-relationship with himself at Sinai (Lindsey 1985:164). Thus to offer a sacrifice to Yahweh was not human effort seeking to obtain favor with a hostile God, but a response to Yahweh who had first given Himself to Israel in covenant-relationship. Rather the function of the Levitical sacrifices is to restore fellowship with Yahweh whenever sin or impurity, whether moral or ceremonial, disrupted this fellowship. The individual or the nation (whichever was the case) needed to renew covenant fellowship through sacrifice, the particular sacrifice depending on the exact circumstance of the disruption.

- Further, while Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to Yahweh (Exod 19:6), the people needed to be instructed on how to achieve this lofty goal. The Book of Leviticus informs Israel in practical terms what it means for them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Thus Leviticus provides the practical theology that is missing in the Book of Exodus. For all

practical purposes there should be no division between the Books of Exodus and Leviticus; they form one book.

- The socio-cultural aspect of the biblical context for Leviticus does not change from that of Exodus, from beginning to end as Israel is camped at Mount Sinai for the entire month that this book deals with chronologically. Thus, in effect, the socio-cultural context for Israel is the same as it was at the end of Exodus. However, it was now be recognized that the laws for worship and personal and national holiness revealed in Leviticus establishes a unique culture which serves to separate Israel to Yahweh to be for him a kingdom of priests and holy nation. From this point on, this is the dominant aspect Israel's socio-cultural context by which all the other writings in the Old Testament as well as the Gospels must be understood.
- The theological element for Leviticus looks back on Genesis and Exodus and subsumes all of their theological revelations as its context. However, major additions to this context must be made as Yahweh reveals Himself through the laws of what is acceptable for approaching him in the Tabernacle, and through the laws of personal and national holiness. These laws not only provide theological insight into the person and nature of God, but also establish the theological framework in terms of the Levitical sacrificial system and priesthood within which the Tabernacle is to function. Thus they add significantly to the theological context within which the rest of the Old Testament, and the Gospels as well, must be understood.

Structure of the Book of Leviticus

A Exhortations and Laws on sacrifice (1:1-7:38)
B. Institution of the priesthood (8:1-10:20)
C. Uncleanliness and its treatment (11:1-16:24)
D. Purification of the tabernacle: Yom Kippurim (16)
C[1] Prescriptions for practical holiness: the Holiness Code (17-22)
B[1] Festivals and Seasons (23-25)
A[1] Exhortation to obey the law: blessing and curse (26-27)

Major Theological Themes

According to Wenham (1992:16), the theology of Leviticus cannot be discussed apart from the other books of the Pentateuch. This is

particularly so for those most closely related to it, namely, the books of Exodus and Numbers which come, respectively, before and after Leviticus both in canonical and chronological order. For instance, Wenham says, Exodus describes the cutting of the Sinai Covenant and the erection of the Tabernacle, both of which are fundamental to the theology of Leviticus. In addition, some of the theological presuppositions of Leviticus and Numbers stand out clearly.

Thus it is that within the context of a covenant-relationship between Yahweh and His redeemed people, and with Yahweh dwelling among His people in the Tabernacle, that the details of worship, the worshipper's approach to Yahweh, and the requirements of dwelling in the presence of the holy God are presented. From this perspective, the two most important themes in the Book of Leviticus are the demands of worship, involving the sacrificial offering system and the observance of the holy convocations administered by the Aaronic priesthood, and the demands of practical holiness.

Sacrificial System

The language of worship pervades the book, with the various components of worship expressed in key terms: the term sacrifice occurs about 42 times, priest about 189 times, blood about 86 times, holy about 87 times, and atonement about 45 times.

- **Covenantal Relationship**: The very heart of the covenant-relationship - fellowship between Yahweh and His people and the means of achieving it are spelled out in the opening statement of Leviticus where, with respect to the burnt offering, Yahweh says, "He must present it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting so that he will be acceptable to Yahweh" (Lev 1:3). The fact that the covenant between Yahweh and Israel was modelled after those of the ancient Near East in both form and function allows one to understand the many cultic details recorded in the Pentateuch. In the case of the Book of Leviticus, the sacrificial offerings were designed to demonstrate the subservience of Israel to her Sovereign, to atone for her offenses against Him, and to reflect the harmoniousness and peaceableness of the relationship thus established or reestablished. In this regard, the brunt offering (Lev 1) and the grain offering (Lev 2) serve to identify the offerer as a servant (vassal) of the King (Suzerain), and as one who dared not

come before his king empty-handed. The sin offering (Lev 4) and the trespass, or guilt, offering (Lev 5) serve to restore a relationship that had become disrupted because of the servant's disobedience. They were his recompense to an offended lord. The peace, or fellowship offerings (Lev 3) constituted an expression of thanksgiving by the vassal for a state of fellowship that currently existed. They were freewill, non-obligatory testimonies to a heart filled with thanksgiving and praise for the benevolence and goodness of Yahweh.

Important from the New Testament's perspective is the fact that it describes Christ's death in terms of Old Testament sacrifices. For example, 1 John 1:2 declares that Christ is "the atoning sacrifice for our sins," and Hebrews 9:22 states that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Further, significant sections of the Book of Hebrews draws upon the ceremonies and rituals of Leviticus to explain the work of Christ, including specific reference to the sin offering (see, Heb 13:11-12).

- **The Concept of Sacrifice:** According to Harrison (1985:599), the general principle undergirding the concept of an offering appears to have been that of property (2 Sam 24:24). However, whereas it was legitimate to sacrifice domesticated animals and birds, which were in a sense the property of man through his own enterprise, it was not permissible for wild animals to be sacrificed, since they were regarded as already belonging to God (see, for example, Ps 50:10). The basic theme of property was more evident in the case of vegetable and grain offerings since they would have been produced as a result of human labor.

  The concept of sacrifice, or offering is clearly important to understanding the Levitical system of worship and sacrifice. One of the basic terms found in the Old Testament which expresses the concept of "offering" is the Hebrew term qorban which is derived from the verb meaning "to bring near." Qorban is a generic term for anything presented to God when one approaches (karav) His sanctuary. A qorban might consist of artifacts and vessels, votive objects, or sacrificial victims. When sacrifices were offered, the individual came to draw near to God, with the hope that the sacrifice would be accepted and that his sin would then be atoned for. Since it aroused the wrath of God, the sacrifice was presented

to appease the wrath of a holy God. Thus the goal of the worshiper was to be reconciled with Yahweh through the offering of a sacrifice.

Sin must be judged, and God reckons that judgment on the sacrifice as a substitute for the sinner, and He accepts the death of the sacrifice as a ransom for sin. God introduced this idea of redemption in conjunction with the Exodus where the death of the Passover lamb served as a substitute to redeem the life of the first-born. Here in Leviticus, the concept of redemption from sin is made more clear through the blood sacrifice of the animal. The animal sacrifice serves as the type pointing to the anti-type, Christ, the ultimate and perfect sacrifice for sin. Isaiah 53 provides clear revelation that God poured out His wrath on this "sacrifice to come" because of the iniquity of His people. Thus the animal sacrifice typified the ultimate sacrifice that Christ would make on the cross, and while it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, Christ, having offered Himself once as a sacrifice for sin, perfected for all time those who are sanctified (Heb 10:1-18).

- **The Role of the Worshiper:** With few exceptions (such as a sin offering for the whole congregation or the offering of small birds by a poor person), the ritual, as LaSor (1990:153) has observed, up to the point of placing the sacrifice on the altar, is the same for all offerings. The worshiper, he notes, was to present his offering personally at the altar or the door of the Tent of Meeting. In this context, the offering was to represent the worshiper's own life-an animal he had raised or grain he had grown-and was to be of superior value (generally a male animal without blemish, or fine flour, or the best of first fruits). In all situations, the economic status of the worshiper was taken into consideration.

  In this exchange, the worshiper then placed his hands on the head of the sacrifice, likely indicating personal identification, a sign that the animal was dying in his place (1:4). Since the ritual of the Day of Atonement clearly stipulates that confession was to be made with the laying on of hands, it seems reasonable to conclude that this was a part of every ritual of sacrifice which involved the laying on of hands. In the cases of the sin and guilt sacrifices specific sins are mentioned, and it is reasonable to conclude here that the worshiper was required to confess the specific sin that he was

aware of as he laid hands on the victim. It was then the responsibility of the offerer to slaughter the animal near the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard, and prepare the sacrifice by cutting it in pieces.

- **The Role of the Priest:** As the worshiper slaughtered the animal, the priest caught the blood in a basin, sprinkled some of the blood on the altar, and poured the rest around its base. Depending on the kind of sacrifice, the priest burned all or part of the animal, Yahweh's portion, on the altar of burnt offering. The fat, which was considered the best part, was always burned (3:16). Except for the burnt offering and certain parts of the sin offering, part of the animal could be eaten by the priest, the offerer, or both. The role of the priests in mediating these sacrificial offerings is also an integral part of the sacrificial system. The priest, though functioning as a mediator between the worshiper and Yahweh, was also a vassal and likewise subject to the same demands and even more so for he had to follow proper protocol in his ministry on behalf of the people. He carried out the prescribed ritual relative to the various offerings as a special servant of Yahweh, and as such he had special responsibilities as well as special privileges. As a special servant of Yahweh the priest enjoyed a portion of the tribute for himself (7:28-36). As a special servant of Yahweh, he was appointed and consecrated (Lev 8), instructed in the appropriate means of sacrificial intercession (Lev 9) and was held strictly accountable to the laws of the Levitical system (10:1-3). Though his office was privileged, his ministry required unique canons of integrity and conduct (10:8-15). The priest was to be a holy man serving a holy God on behalf of a holy people. The essence of the priestly ministry is articulated in Leviticus 10:10-11: ". . to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean, and so as to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which Yahweh has spoken to them through Moses."
- **The Significance of the Blood:** It is clear from the text of Leviticus that in all the laws of the offerings the blood of the sacrifice is emphasized. The physical significance of the blood is evident from the text; the shedding of the blood means the death of the victim - "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (17:11a). The theological significance of the blood is explicitly stated in the text; the blood was given to make atonement - "I (Yahweh) have

given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement" (17:11b). Since it is the blood of the sacrifice that effects atonement, the death of the animal becomes efficacious for the one offering the sacrifice. This transfer takes place as the one making the sacrifice identifies himself with the victim through the laying on of hands. Thus the death of the offering is understood as a substitute for the death of the worshiper - the penalty for sin is death, but the animal dies in the place of the sinner. The theological significance of the blood, then, is to effect atonement by substitution, a theological concept known as substitutionary atonement.

Significance of OT Sacrifice: The Concept of Atonement

Lindsey (1985:164) has noted that under the Levitical law, sacrifice was given by God as the only sufficient means for the sons of Israel to approach Him and to remain in harmonious fellowship with Him. The effective means by which this was accomplished was through the principle of atonement through substitutionary sacrifice (see, for example, 1:3-5; 4:4-5:13; 5:14-18; 16:5-27). The traditional view that the sacrifices only "covered" sin fails to do justice to the real forgiveness that was granted by God (see, for example, 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7).

Lindsey (1985:174) adds that the purpose of the sacrificial enactment, as defined in Leviticus, was to effect "atonement" on behalf of the person offering the sacrifice. The Hebrew verb *kipper*, translated into English as meaning "to atone," has been related to the comparatively late Arabic word *kafara*, "to cover"; to the Akkadian term *kuppuru*, "to wipe away," and to the Hebrew noun *kopher*, "ransom." The latter term best suits the specific purpose of Israelite sacrifice theory as elaborated in Leviticus 17:11, which identified the life with the blood and laid down the principle that the blood "makes atonement by reason of the life." The animal victim thus constituted a substitute for the human sinner, and the offering of its life in sacrifice effected a vicarious atonement for sin. The Hebrew sacrificial system must, however, always be envisaged against a background of the Covenant principle of divine grace. In this context the emphasis upon the categories of personal relationship with God can only be properly understood within the theological framework of a theory of substitution where the chosen victim dies in the place of the human sinner.

It is not easy to decide from the text if the sacrificial offering was meant to be a propitiation of divine anger as well as an expiation for human sin, for while there are undoubtedly some instances where the verb signifies "propitiation" (Exod 32:30; Num 16:41 ff.), there are others where it simply means "to cleanse," as, for example, with the furnishings of the Tabernacle (Exod 29:37; Ezek 43:20). Yet it seems that where it is used to refer to atonement with respect to man, there is always in the background the fact of divine wrath. Thus, it would seem that of necessity the atonement effected through substitutionary sacrifice involves not only expiation of the sin, but also the propitiation of the divine Lawgiver in order that the relationship between God and man be restored. It would seem, therefore, that expiation had the effect of making propitiation - turning away divine wrath by a satisfactory, substitutionary sacrifice. This understanding seems valid in light of Paul's declaration that man is justified by God's grace through faith in the redemption which is in Christ, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation (Rom 3:21-25). What is very clear from Leviticus is that man as a sinner incurs divine wrath, that God has provided the sacrificial system in order that human transgressors might return in penitence to fellowship with Him, and that God has graciously permitted the death of a sacrificial victim as a substitute for the death of the sinner.

Finally, it should be noted that the Hebrew sacrificial system was not by any means, Lindsey (1985:165) says, to be a complete and final scheme whereby all forms of sin could be removed. Much of the atonement procedure was concerned with sins accidentally committed, sins inadvertently committed, or sins of omission; there was no forgiveness for sins committed as a result of sheer human stubborn persistence in wrong doing (Num 15:30), which by definition placed a man outside the range of Covenant mercies (see, for example, Lev 20). In the main, it can be stated that for breaches of the Covenant agreement no form of sacrifice was of any avail. It is in the light of this latter consideration that the cultic denunciations of the prophets and their rejection of sacrifice need be interpreted (see, for example, Isa 1:11-14). Although the prophets sometimes gave the impression that sacrifices were useless, the purpose of such preaching was to shake the people out of their lethargy. Ritual for ritual sake was wrong (see, for example, 1 Sam 15:22). What was required was for the worshiper to bring a sacrifice with a repentant heart (Isa 1:16-18).

The Sacrificial Offerings

Five offerings were included in the so-called Levitical law which Yahweh revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai. One of these, always referred to in the plural as the "peace offerings," consisted of three somewhat different offerings; the thank offering, the votive offering, and the freewill offering. Hence, there were seven offerings in all. Since all but the "grain offering" involved the killing of an animal, these offerings are often referred to as (blood) "sacrifices."

The Burnt Offering

The burnt offering - the concept coming from the Hebrew verb 'olah meaning "that which goes up" (probably so called because the whole sacrifice "went up" in smoke to God) - was distinct in that it was totally consumed on the altar except for the hide or the crop of the bird (Lindsey 1985:173). This seems to be the oldest designated sacrifice (see, for example, Gen 8:20) and the most frequent form of Israel's sacrifices. Lindsey has noted that, like all the Levitical sacrifices, the underlying purpose of the burnt offering was to secure atonement for sins (1:4; see also, for example, Num 15:24-25), though its more immediate purpose was to express total dedication to Yahweh. The verbal picture of a "sweet aroma" ascending to God's nostrils is figurative language describing God's pleasure with the offering and His acceptance of the individual approaching Him (1:9). Although burnt offerings were prescribed for regular daily, weekly, and monthly occasions (see, for example, Exod 29:38-42; Num 28:9-10, 11-15), and as part of the sacrifices offered on the occasion of annual festivals (see, for example, Lev 23), they could also be brought voluntarily by an individual (see, for example, Lev 14:19-20; 15:14-15; 22:17-20).

The Grain Offering

The grain offering - the minhah, which outside of the Levitical system could refer to any gift or offering; see, for example, Gen 4:3-5; Judges 6:18; 1 Sam 2:17, 29; Mal 2:13), was normally a coarsely ground grain, either wheat or barley, mixed with olive oil and topped with frankincense (Lindsey 1985:176). This offering was to be free of leaven and honey (2:11), but was to be salted like all offerings for the altar (2:13). While a grain offering could be offered by itself as a distinct sacrifice (e.g., 2:14-16; 6:14; Num 5:15), its more common

use was as an accompaniment to either a burnt or a peace offering. In particular, it always accompanied peace offerings (7:12-14; see, for example, Num 15:4) and normally accompanied burnt offerings, especially the calendrical offerings (Num 28-29). Behind the idea of the grain offering was the recognition that as grain was the primary food for maintaining life, so God was the true source of life and substance and therefore everything the worshiper had belonged to God. From this concept comes the idea that the grain offering was the worshiper's dedication offering, dedicating everything he had to Yahweh from whom it all had come.

The Peace Offerings

The peace offerings - generally described in Leviticus collectively by the Hebrew term *shelamim* - a derivative of the term shalom meaning "completeness," "soundness," "welfare," "peace" - always appears in the plural and has been traditionally translated "peace offerings." These offerings are further quantified in Leviticus by the Hebrew term *zevah* which in English means a "sacrifice." *Zevah* is the common and most ancient sacrifice whose essential rite was eating the flesh of the victim at a feast in which the god of the clan shared by receiving the blood and fat pieces. Thus, *zevah*, the general name for all sacrifices which are eaten at feasts, qualifies the peace offerings as including a communal meal as part of the rite.

Since the Hebrew concept of peace includes health, prosperity, and peace with God, some translate it as a sacrifice of "well-being," while others understand it as a "fellowship" offering because of its distinctive feature of the communal meal after the sacrifice. The peace offering parallels the burnt offering in form but, apparently, not in function as no mention is made of the peace offering effecting atonement, although this might be implied in the normal laying on of hands, the slaying of the animal, the manipulation of the blood, and the burning of the fat portions on the altar, which is virtually identical with the ritual of the sin offering which is the most explicit atoning sacrifice. Lindsey (1985:178) observes that the proper classification of the peace offerings (and its sub-categories discussed below) is that of communal offering because of the communal meal which climaxed the sacrifice. The peace offering was a time of great rejoicing before Yahweh (Dt 12:12, 18-19; 27:7; 1 Kings 8:64-65). It was a time in which the worshipers, their families, and a Levite from their community (and

also the poor during the Feast of Weeks, Dt 16:11) shared a major portion of the sacrificial meal together before Yahweh (7:11-36).

While the peace offering was primarily an optional sacrifice. It had its function in other aspects of the Levitical system (Lindsey 1985:178). For example, the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) was the only annual festival for which peace offerings were prescribed (23:19-20). But this offering was also prescribed for certain special ceremonies of covenant initiation (Exod 24:5) or renewal (Dt 27:7), consecration (see, for example, Exod 29:19-34; Lev 8:22-32; 9:8-21; 1 Kings 8:63) or de-consecration (fulfillment of a Nazarite vow, Num 6:14, 17), as well as for other occasions such as a successful military campaign (1 Sam 11:15). Three subcategories of the peace offering (Lev 7:11-16) suggest occasions or motivations for bringing this sacrifice (Lindsey 1985:178).

- One is a thanksgiving offering - in Hebrew, *thetodah*, meaning "confession" or "acknowledgment" - was the most common type (7:12-15; 22:9), almost synonymous with the peace offering itself (see, for example, 2 Chron 29:31; 33:16; Jer 17:26). This offering was brought as an acknowledgment to other individuals of God's deliverance or blessing bestowed in answer to prayer (see, for example, Ps 56:12-13; 107:22; 116:17-19; Jer 33:11).
- Another type is the votive (vow) offering - in Hebrew, the *neder* - was a ritual expression of a vow (7:16; see, for example, 27:9-10), or the fulfillment of a vow (see, for example, Num 6:17-20).
- A third type is the freewill offering - in Hebrew, *thenedavah* - was brought to express devotion or thankfulness to God for some unexpected blessing (7:16; 22:18-23).

The Sin Offering

It is important to recognize, as Lindsey (1985:180) points out, that although the sin offering and the guilt offering, subsequently discussed, are distinguishable, they clearly have some definite similarities. This is especially the case with regards to their primary function as both can best be described as expiatory offerings. Not all sins could be atoned for by means of a sin offering. Only sins committed unintentionally (these could be sins of omission as well as sins of commission; see, for example, Num 15:22-23) could be atoned for with a sin offering. The sin offering, however, did not cover were sins committed with a defiant attitude (see, for example, Num 15:30 which

literally means "with a high hand") - that is, sin with a purpose of being disobedient to God. For such cases as these, no sin offering could be brought by an individual (Lindsey 1985:180). The only hope for cleansing from such sins lay in the Day of Atonement ritual which provided yearly cleansing from "all their sins" (16:20), "so that they will be clean from all [their] sins" (16:30). The sin offering, therefore, was applicable only for sin not done in a spirit of rebellion against Yahweh and His covenant stipulations, whether they were sins of ignorance (Lev 4), sins without conscious intent (Lev 5), or intentional but non-defiant sins (such as for manslaughter where the act is committed without premeditation).

The Guilt Offering

The guilt or trespass offering - ('*asham*), observes Lindsey (1985:183), was required whenever someone committed a "violation" - an act of misappropriation or denial to another (whether God or man) of his rightful due (see, for example, Num 5:12, 19; Josh 7:1; 22:20; 2 Chron 26:16, 18; 28:22-23). This offering covered violations such as defrauding someone, or trespassing upon another's rights. When such acts came to light and were confessed, the wrong had to be made right with appropriate compensation. For example, if the violation could be assessed for monetary compensation, then the offender was required to bring the ram for the guilt offering as well as compensation in property or silver plus a 20 percent fine (5:16; 6:5). The violations covered by the laws of the guilt offering, pertain, Lindsey (1985:183) writes, to intentional misappropriation of sacred property (5:14-16) and service (see, for example, 14:12, 24), suspected transgressions of divine commands (5:17-19), and the violation of the property rights of others (6:1-7; see also, for example, 19:20-22; Num 5:6-10). The common denominator of the guilt offering, therefore, was an offense that caused damage or loss whether unintentional or deliberate, and either against God or man. The guilt offering, however, is also usually involved with ceremonial defilement and is associated with such ceremonies as the cleansing of a leper (14:1 ff.) or the purification of a women after childbirth (12:1 ff.).

Typological Significance of the Sacrificial Offerings

As has been previously noted, the animal sacrifice served as a type pointing to Christ, theantitype. The following summarizes the

typological significance that some see in the various sacrificial offerings. A tabular summation of the typological relationship of the sacrifices is presented in Chart 2.

- Typological Significance of the Burnt Offering: While all of the animal offerings pointed to the death of Christ, the burnt offering typified Christ's death not so much as bearing sin as accomplishing the will of God (Lindsey 1985:176). Christ was the Lamb of God (John 1:29) who gave himself in complete dedication to accomplishing God's will. This is indicated in Hebrews 9:14: "Christ ... offered Himself unblemished to God" (see also, for example, Eph 5:1-2; Phil 2:8; Heb 10:5-7).
- Typological Significance of the Grain Offering: The grain offering is normally found in conjunction with the burnt or peace/fellowship offerings. The typology of the grain may be understood, therefore, as being complimentary to these blood sacrifices, which typify the substitutionary value of Christ's death on the cross, in the sense that they typify the person of Christ. For example, it may be that the fine flour speaks of His perfect, well-balanced humanity, the oil pictures the Holy Spirit who overshadowed Him at the Incarnation, the frankincense points to the moral fragrance of His person, and the absence of leaven illustrates His separateness from sin (Lindsey 1985:177).
- Typological Significance of the Peace Offering: The typology of the peace offering, Lindsey (1985:180) offers, pictures the fellowship that the New Testament believer has with God and with other believers on the basis of Christ's death on the cross (1 John 1:3). This, Lindsey says, is one aspect of Christ's "making peace through His blood which he shed on the cross" (Col 1:20). Clearly, as Paul reveals, "He Himself is our peace" (Eph 2:14).
- Typological Significance Of The Sin Offering: The typology of the sin offering, according to Lindsey (1985:182), emphasizes the death of Christ as a satisfactory substitutionary sacrifice, a ransom, to provide for the forgiveness of sins (2 Cor 5:21; Eph 1:7).
- Typological Significance of the Guilt Offering: The typology of the guilt offering, Lindsey (1985:184) writes, stresses that aspect of Christ's death which atones for the damage or injury done by sin. Isaiah foresaw the death of Christ as a "guilt offering" (Isa 53:10).

Conclusions on the Levitical Sacrificial System

By way of summary, the Levitical sacrifices had a number of limitations.

1. It must be understood that the sacrifices were limited in their moral efficacy. Furthermore, it must be recognized that empty ritualism was never an acceptable option to God. Thus a truly acceptable sacrifice must be prompted by genuine faith and moral obedience to the revealed will of God (26:14-45, see especially 26:31; see also Pss 40:6-8; 51:16-17; Amos 5:21-24; Heb 10:5-10; 11:4, 6).

2. It is important to understand that, with the possible exception of the Day of Atonement ritual, the sacrifices were limited in scope to certain kinds of personal sins. Further, they did not atone for the sin nature, for the imputed sin of Adam, nor did they include willful acts of sin committed in defiance of God. Therefore, the Levitical sacrificial system did not provide for a complete and final scheme whereby all forms of sin could be removed.

3. The sacrifices were limited in purpose to the covenant preservation and renewal of a redeemed people. The Levitical sacrifices were a part of the worship of a redeemed people in covenant-relationship with their God. While members of the Exodus generation experienced regeneration and justification through faith in the blood of the Passover lamb, each new generation needed to likewise express faith (likely through their faithful celebration of the Passover and Day of Atonement festivals) before their worship of God would be acceptable and truly maintain fellowship with Him.

4. Except for the Day of Atonement ritual, the sacrifices were limited in scope andduration to one sin per sacrifice.. Although the forgiveness was temporary in the sense that each sin required another sacrifice, the forgiveness was real in the sense that God truly forgave the individual. This is consistent with Genesis 15:6 which reveals that God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness.

5. It must be noted that the efficacy of sacrifice was not inherent in the animals sacrificed or in any or all parts of the sacrificial ritual. Rather God provided atonement and forgiveness on the basis of the all-sufficient sacrifice that Jesus Christ would offer on the cross. His death was "a sacrifice of atonement" which God accepted

as paid in full for the forgiveness which He had extended before the Cross (Rom 3:25). It is on the basis of Christ's death alone as the one truly efficacious sacrifice for all sin that the Levitical sacrifices were validated, as it were, in the mind of God - Christ is the Lamb of God who was slain from the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8; see, for example, 1 Pet 1:19-20). It is evident from this that the efficacious value of the sacrifices was derivative rather than original. It is in this sense that the author of Hebrews asserts, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb 10:4). Nevertheless, the spiritual benefits experienced by the Old Testament believers were just as real as the benefits experienced by New Testament believers.

In the final analysis, the Levitical sacrifices were efficacious for restoring the covenant-relationship. However, when offered in faith, it was also efficacious for the actual forgiveness of particular sins,. But this efficacy was derivative, needing to be validated by the one all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

The Feasts

The demands of holiness in approach to Yahweh also require strict adherence to the times of holy convocations appointed by Yahweh. These included the weekly Sabbath (23:3), and the yearly festivals of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (23:4-8), the Feast of First Fruits (23:9-14), the Feast of Pentecost (23:15-22), the Feast of Trumpets (23:23-25), the Day of Atonement (23:26-32), and the Feast of Tabernacles (23:33-44). In the context of the need to be a holy nation to Yahweh in covenant-relationship, Israel needed to be reminded of the unique set of circumstances by which they were called to that relationship. While the purpose of these convocations was multidimensional, it would seem that a major reason for them was to remind Israel of the historical basis for their worship, and to provide a context within which worship could be expressed to Yahweh for what He had done, was doing, and was yet going to do for Israel.

All of these festivals were associated with the agricultural season. To properly appreciate the importance of the seasonal associations of these festivals it is necessary to know at least the essentials of the climatic conditions of the Land of Israel. The wet season began late in the seventh month of Tishri with the early rains. Plowing began in

the eighth month followed in the ninth month of Kislev by the planting of the grain crops (wheat and barley). The winter season was therefore a time of crop growth. The latter rains occur in about the first month of Abib/Nisan and end in the second month which begins the dry season. Harvesting began during the dry season–first barley and then wheat. The summer crops - grapes, olives, and fruits - ripened during the rain-less summer months and were gathered in before the early rains in the fall, which began the agricultural cycle all over again. A tabular summary, derived in part from Hannah (1985:127), is presented below in Chart 3 showing the relationship between the Hebrew calendar months, festivals, and agricultural seasons.

1. The Passover

The Passover (pesah) was the first of three annual pilgrimage festivals and was celebrated on the 14th of Nisan (post-Exilic; formerly Abib, Exod 13:4), thereafter continuing as the Feast of Unleavened Bread from the 15th to the 21st. Nisan marked the beginning of the religious or sacred new year (Exod 12:2). The Hebrew term pesah is from a root meaning "to pass (or spring) over," and signifies the passing over (sparing) of the house of Israel when the firstborn of Egypt were slain (Exod 12). The Passover itself refers only to the paschal supper on the evening of the 14th, whereas the following period, 15th to the 21st, is called the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exod 12; 13:1-10; Lev 23:5-8; Num 28:16-25; Dt 16:1-8).

Institution and Celebration: The purpose for its institution was to commemorate the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage and the sparing of Israel's firstborn when God smote the firstborn of Egypt. In observance of the first Passover, on the 10th of Nisan the head of each family sets apart a lamb without blemish. On the evening of the 14th the lamb was slain and some of its blood sprinkled on the door posts and lintel of the house in which they ate the Passover as a seal against the coming judgment upon Egypt. The lamb was then roasted whole and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Any portion remaining was to be burned the next morning. Each was to eat in haste with loins girded, shoes on the feet, and staff in hand.

Later Observance: After the establishment of the priesthood and Tabernacle, the celebration of the Passover differed in some particulars from the Egyptian Passover. These distinctions were:

- the Passover lamb was to be slain at the sanctuary rather than at home (Dt 16:5-6);
- the blood was sprinkled upon the altar instead of the door posts;
- besides the family sacrifice for the Passover meal, there were public and national sacrifices offered each of the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Num 28:16-24);
- the meaning of the Passover was recited at the feast each year (Exod 12;24-27);
- the singing of the Hallel (Pss. 113-118) during the meal was later instituted;
- a second Passover on the 14th day of the second month was to be kept by those who were ceremonially unclean or away on a journey at the time of its regular celebration on the 14th of Nisan (Num 9:9-12).

The Passover was one of the three feasts in which all males were required to come to the sanctuary. They were not to appear empty-handed, but were to bring offerings as the Lord had prospered them (Exod 23:14-17; Dt 16:16-17). It was unlawful to eat leavened food after midday of the 14th, and all labor, with few exceptions, ceased. After appropriate blessings a first cup of wine was served, followed by the eating of a portion of the bitter herbs. Before the lamb and the unleavened bread were eaten, a second cup of wine was provided at which time the son, in compliance with Exodus 12:26, asked the father the meaning and significance of the Passover feast. An account of the Egyptian bondage and deliverance was recited in reply. The first portion of the Hallel (Pss. 113-114) was then sung and the paschal supper eaten, followed by the third and fourth cups of wine and the second part of the Hallel (Pss. 115-118).

2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread

Both the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which imme-diately followed, commemorated the Exodus, the former in remem-brance of God's "passing over" the Israelites when He slew the firstborn of Egypt, and the latter, to keep alive the memory of their afflictions and God's bringing them out in haste from Egypt ("bread of affliction" Dt 16:3). The first and last days of this feast were Sabbaths in which no servile work could be done, except the necessary

preparation of food. The Passover season marked the beginning of the grain harvest in Palestine.

3. The Feast of First Fruits

On the second day of Unleavened Bread (16th Nisan), a sheaf of the first fruits of the barley harvest was to be presented as a wave offering (23:9-11). The ceremony came to be called "the omer ceremony" from the Hebrew for sheaf, omer.

4. The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)

The Feast of Weeks was to be observed fifty days (seven weeks) after the Passover (Exod 34:22; Lev 23:15-22; Dt 16:9-10) and for this reason came to be known in New Testament times as "Pentecost" (see, for example, Acts 2:1). It is also called the "Feast of Harvest" (Exod 23:16) and the "Day of First-fruits" (Num 28:26).

The Feast of Weeks was a one-day festival in which all males were to appear at the sanctuary, and a Sabbath in which all servile labor was suspended. The central feature of the day was the offering of two loaves of bread for the people from the first fruits of the wheat harvest (23:17). As the omer ceremony signified the harvest season had begun, the presentation of the two loaves indicated its close. It was a day of thanksgiving in which freewill offerings were made (Dt 16:10-12). The festival day signified the dedication of the harvest to God as the provider of all blessings. Although it was a day of "sacred assembly" (23:21) in which there were an assortment of blood sacrifices, the Feast of Weeks was also a time to "rejoice before Yahweh" and to share with family members and with the poor the abundant provisions of food (Dt 16:10-12) that Yahweh had provided.

The Old Testament does not specifically give any historical significance for the day, the Feast of Weeks being the only one of the three great agricultural feasts which does not commemorate some event in Jewish history. Later tradition, on the basis of Exodus 19:1, taught that the giving of the law at Sinai was fifty days after the Exodus and Passover, and as a result shabu'ot has also become known as the Torah festival. The Book of Ruth, which describes the harvest season, is read at the observance of the Feast of Weeks. The significance of this day for the New Testament is set forth in Acts 2,

when on the day of Pentecost the Church had its beginning with the pouring out of the Spirit on the believers gathered in Jerusalem.

5. The Feast of Trumpets

The new moon of the seventh month (1st of Tishri) constituted the beginning of the civil new year and was designated as ro'sh hashshana, "the first of the year," or yom teru'a, "day of sounding" (the trumpet). The blowing of the shofar, or ram's horn, occupied a significant place on several other occasions, such as the monthly new moon and the Year of Jubilee, but especially so at the beginning of the new year, hence its name - Feast of Trumpets. The Hebrew calendar actually began with the moon of Nisan in the spring at the beginning of the month (Exod 12:2), but since the end of the seventh month, Tishri, usually marked the beginning of the rainy season in Palestine when the year's work of plowing and planting began, Tishri was constituted as the beginning of the economic and civil year. Business transactions, sabbatical years and jubilee years were all determined from the first of the seventh month.

The day was observed as a sabbatical feast day with special sacri-fices, and looked forward to the solemn Day of Atonement ten days later.

6. The Day of Atonement

The annual Day of Atonement (yom hakkippurim) is set forth in Leviticus 16; 23:27-32 as the supreme act of national atonement for sin. It took place on the 10th day of the seventh month, Tishri, and fasting was commanded from the evening of the 9th day until the evening of the 10th day, in keeping with the unusual sanctity of the day. On this day an atonement was effected for the people, the priesthood, and for the sanctuary itself because it "dwelled with them in the midst of their uncleanness" (16:16).

This ritual was divided into two acts, one performed on behalf of the priesthood, and one on behalf of the nation Israel. The high priest, who had moved a week previous to this day from his own dwelling to the sanctuary, arose on the Day of Atonement, and having bathed and laid aside his regular high priestly attire, dressed himself in holy white linen garments, and brought forward a young bullock for a sin offering for himself and for his house. The other priests who on other

occasions served in the sanctuary on this day took their place with the sinful congregation for whom atonement was to be made (16:17). The high priest slew the sin offering for himself and entered the holy of holies with a censor of incense, so that a cloud of incense might fill the room and cover the ark in order that he would not die. Then he returned with the blood of the sin offering and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat on the east, and seven times before the mercy seat for the symbolic cleansing of the holy of holies which was defiled by its presence among the sinful people. Having made atonement for himself, he returned to the court of the sanctuary.

The high priest next presented the two goats, which had been secured as the sin offering for the people, to the Lord at the door of the Tabernacle and cast lots over them; one lot marked to Yahweh, and the other for the scapegoat. The goat upon which the lot had fallen for Yahweh was slain, and the high priest repeated the ritual of sprinkling the blood as before. In addition, he cleansed the holy place by a seven-fold sprinkling, and lastly, cleansed the altar of burnt offering.

The high priest then took the live goat, the scapegoat, which had been left standing at the altar, and, laying hands upon it, confessed over it all the sins of the people. After that, the scapegoat was sent into an uninhabited wilderness bearing the iniquity of the nation of Israel, thus symbolizing the removal of Israel's sins.

7. The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles (hag hassukkot), the third of the pilgrimage feasts, was celebrated for seven days from the 15th to 21st day of Tishri, the seven month. It was followed by an eighth day of holy convocation with appropriate sacrifices (Lev 23:33 ff.; Num 29:12-38; Dt 16:13-15). It was also called "the Feast of Ingathering" (Exod 23:16) for the autumn harvest of the fruits and olives, with the ingathering of the threshing floor and the wine press, which occurred at this time (Lev 23:39; Dt 16:13). It was the outstanding feast of rejoicing in the year, in which the Israelites, during the seven day period, lived in booths or huts made of boughs in commemoration of their wilderness wanderings when their fathers dwelt in temporary shelters. The whole family was to recall the hardships of the past and to give thanks for the abundance of Canaan, the land in which their

joy could "be complete" (Dt 16:25). According to Numbers 29:12-34, a large number of burnt offerings and one sin offering were sacrificed each day. Sacrifices were more numerous during this feast than at any other, consisting of the offering of 189 animals for the seven day period.

When the feast coincided with a sabbatical year, the law was read publicly to the entire congregation at the sanctuary (Dt 31:10-13). As Josephus and the Talmud indicate, new ceremonies were gradually added to the festival, chief of which was the simhat bet hasho'ebah, "the festival of the drawing of water." In this ceremony a golden pitcher was filled from the pool of Siloam and returned to the priest at the Temple amid the joyful shouts of the celebrants, after which the water was poured into a basin at the altar (see, for example, John 7:37-38). At night the streets and temple court were illuminated by innumerable torches carried by the singing, dancing pilgrims. The booths were dismantled on the last day, and the eighth day which followed was observed as a sabbath day of holy convocation. The feast is mentioned by Zechariah as a joyous celebration in the Millennium (Zech 14:16).

On the twenty-second of the month a holy convocation brought to an end not only the Feast of Tabernacles but the whole cycle of feasts starting with the Passover. God had blessed His people both materially and spiritually, and they were never to forget all of His benefits (see, for example, Dt 8:10-14).

Typological Significance of Israel's Festivals

1. Typological Nature of the Feasts: That the feasts of Leviticus 23 are types which prophesied God's redemptive program for Israel are well argued for by dispensationalists. More accurately translated as "appointed times," these celebrations were integral, essential, and interdependent components of an annual cycle of worship which traced the progressive steps by which God would redeem a sinful and rebellious Israel and ultimately bring His covenant people into the blessings and joy of the Messianic (Millennial) Kingdom.

2. The typology of the first four feasts has historically been fulfilled; Passover predicted the death of Christ as Redeemer, Unleavened Bread the separated life of the redeemed, First Fruits the resurrection of Christ, and Weeks (or Pentecost) the coming of the Holy Spirit. It

is important to note here that the church was not foreshadowed by the Feast of Pentecost, for it is not revealed in the typology of any of the feasts. Rather, the church benefits from God's fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham concerning the blessing of the nations, which blessing is fulfilled through the Seed of Abraham, namely, Christ (see Gal 3:16).

3. It is also important to recognize that leaven in the feasts expressed the idea of continuity, not sin. Thus, in the Feast of Unleavened Bread its absence pictured the break from dependence upon life in Egypt. Its presence in the loaves of Pentecost connected the first fruits of the barley crop with the end of the wheat harvest fifty days later, thus, typologically demonstrating the continuity between the resurrection of Christ and the pouring out of the Spirit. Because each feast was an essential part of the annual cycle, the historical typological fulfillment of the first four makes necessary an equally literal, future historical fulfillment for the last three.

While the historical significance of each feast is important in the religious and social life of the nation of Israel, it is their relation to the future that is most important - the feast as a type finds its fulfillment in the antitype, which for the most part has salvific and/or eschatological significance which is centered in Christ.

- **Feast of Passover**: Scripture clearly indicates that the typology of this feast was fulfilled in Christ's death on the cross. There He satisfied every requirement of the Passover lamb in His person and work. The prior identification of Christ as the Lamb of God by John the Baptist (John 1:29) and the later reference by Paul (1 Cor 5:7) to the sacrificial death of Christ as the typical fulfillment of the Passover, establish the identity of this antitype beyond controversy.
- **Feast of Unleavened Bread**: The key to identifying the antitype of this feast lies in its connection with the Passover, in particular, in noting the causal relationship between the two and the parallel in their antitypes, and in understanding the meaning of the type. In the context of the original Passover the leaven basically and historically represented a continuity between the old life in relation to Egypt and the new life in relation to Yahweh. Its domestic use assured a link from the daily bread of one day to the next. For a

people who customarily used a piece of old dough to cause the new dough to rise, the prohibition of this substance for seven days, without further theological instruction, could only indicate a break in the continuity of their baking. In effect, this meant that as each day's dough was kneaded without any old dough, or "leaven," further separation occurred between the past and the present. Beginning immediately after the eating of the Passover lamb, the seven-day period coincided with the start of the Exodus and therefore made a complete break between the food prepared in Egypt and the food to be supplied by Yahweh. Redeemed people could not depend on their former masters for sustenance, even for the leavening effect of the old dough, for this constituted a clear continuity between the old life and the new. Thus, in this context, leaven, or more correctly, the lack of using it, symbolizes separation from the old life. Paul (1 Cor 5:6-8) related the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Passover in exhorting the Corinthian church toseparate themselves from all that was of the old life. Therefore, the antitype of the type of the Feast of Leavened Bread is seen in the separation of the redeemed person from all association with the old life so that he may enter into the full supply of the new life.

- **Feast of First Fruits**: The Apostle Paul strongly implies that the fulfillment of the festal type of First Fruits is found in the resurrection of Christ - "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor 15:20-22). Although Paul does not here, or elsewhere, specifically state that the resurrection of Christ fulfilled this type, there can be little doubt concerning this conclusion.
- **Feast of Pentecost**: There is no explicit New Testament indication that the festal type of the Feast of Weeks is fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, but the context in which His coming is portrayed strongly suggests that the Spirit is the antitype. Much of the Upper Room Discourse of John 13-17 involved Christ's teaching concerning His own departure and the Spirit's coming. In John 16:7 He linked the two acts - "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go I will send

Him to you." The correct order of this sequence, in which Christ fulfilled the first three feasts before the Holy Spirit came, was understood by John as he later commented, "But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). Thus, according to the understanding of the Apostle John, the coming of the Spirit followed the glorification of Christ which occurred when He was resurrected, and which itself was the fulfillment of the festal type encoded in the Feast of First Fruits.

Not only was the link between the resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Spirit prophesied before these events took place, but it was also recognized afterwards as it becomes the basis of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. There can be no mistaking of the Apostle's understanding of the meaning of the antitype of Pentecost and its organic link with the antitype of First Fruits as he proclaimed to the Jews that, "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear" (Acts 2:32-33). As the predicted resurrection of Christ had occurred seven weeks earlier on the very day the Jews celebrated the Feast of First Fruits, so the predicted coming of the Holy Spirit had occurred on the very day of the Feast of Pentecost.

- **Feast of Trumpets**: Historically the Feast of Trumpets represented God's call to the nation of Israel to prepare for the soul-searching, or repentance, of the Day of Atonement in anticipation of the Feast of Tabernacles. Typologically, the Feast of Trumpets will be fulfilled, in broad terms, in God's call of His covenant people for their day of national repentance and receiving of Messiah. The Book of Zechariah indicates that in the day of Christ's return the house of Israel will mourn His coming because He will enable them to understand that they killed Him at His first coming (Zech 12:10-11). Thus, associated with Christ's return there will be repentance on the part of the remnant of Israel surviving the Tribulation. Further, the Book of Matthew indicates that in association with Christ's return there will be the sounding of a great trumpet (Matt 24:29-31). On this basis it would seem that the typological fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets is seen in the coming again of Christ and the repentance of Israel's remnant which will immediately follow.

- **Feast of the Day of Atonement**: The historical concepts involved with the Day of Atonement include the idea of a national cleansing from sin, a complete cleansing from sin (16:30, 34), and a confession of sin (16:21) and the humbling of self before Yahweh (16:29; 23:27, 29, 32). Although historically it provided the means for cleansing the people of the last vestiges of the sins of the year, the Day of Atonement foreshadowed a far more significant cleansing to take place in Israel's future. In view of the typical significance of all the feasts and the stress placed upon national cleansing on the Day of Atonement, this feast must find its fulfillment in a future repentance, humbling, and cleansing of Israel as a nation as a prerequisite for entrance into the messianic kingdom of which the Feast of Tabernacles is the festal type. It is just such a fulfillment which is described by the prophet Zechariah in his survey of Israel's eschatological future (Zech 12:10-13:1). In this passage the basic elements of a national repentance together with its resultant cleansing from sin is quite evident. Thus, it would seem the antitype corresponds to the essential features of the type noted above.
- **Feast of Tabernacles**: It has been noted that the cycle of feasts is typical, and that it foreshadows God's entire program of redemption and blessing for Israel. In view of this, it is not surprising to understand the typological fulfillment of the last of Israel's great feasts from the perspective of the prophesied messianic Davidic kingdom since this is the one component of the program not yet involved in that fulfillment. Historically, the Feast of Tabernacles was to be a celebration remembering the time when Yahweh had His people live in booths in the wilderness prior to bringing them into the Land of Promise. The celebration was to last seven days and it was to be a time of rejoicing before Yahweh (23:40). The eschatological significance, and thus typological fulfillment of this feast, is found in the Book of Zechariah where it is stated that after Christ returns to earth and the remnant of Israel repents, the Feast of Booths will be celebrated from year to year, not only by Israel, but as well by the nations which will be required to come to Jerusalem for the observance (Zech 14:16-19). Thus, the typological fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles is linked to worship in the Millennial kingdom which will the time of joy, par excellence. This age will see the realization of the protection foreshadowed in the

ceremonial booths and in the great abundance of provision that will characterize that age and which will bring great joy to the people of the kingdom as they partake of the great blessings of those days.

Sabbatical Year

The *shenat shabbaton*, "year of rest" or sabbatical year, like the weekly sabbath, was designed by God with a benevolent purpose in view. Every seventh year the land was to lie fallow, the uncultivated increase to be left to the poor Israelite. Further, as noted in Deuteronomy 15:1, all debts were to be canceled in the sabbatical year.

According to II Chr 36:21, observance of the sabbatical year had been neglected for about 500 years. As a consequence the captivity of Judah in Babylon was decreed to be seventy years long allowing the land to enjoy its neglected Sabbaths - "for as long as it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years". After the period of captivity, the people under Nehemiah bound themselves to the faithful observance of the seventh year, covenanting that "we would forego the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt" (Neh 10:31).

Year of Jubilee

Seven sabbatical cycles of years (i.e., 49 years) terminated in the Year of Jubilee. The fiftieth year is called "the year of liberty" (deror) in Ezekiel 46:17 (see, for example, Jer 34:8, 15,17) on the basis of Leviticus 25:10 - "and you shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land ... it shall be a jubilee unto you."

According to Leviticus 25:9, the Year of Jubilee was announced by the sounding of rams' horns throughout the land on the tenth day of the seventh month, which was also the great Day of Atonement. The Year of Jubilee was not, as some have thought, the forty-ninth year, and thus simplify a seventh sabbatical year, but was, as Leviticus 25:10 states, the fiftieth year, thus providing two successive sabbatical years in which land would have rest. Certain regulations were issued to take effect during the Year of Jubilee. They are:

- Rest for the land (25:11-12). As in the preceding sabbatical year, the land was to remain uncultivated and the people were to eat of the natural increase. To compensate for this, God promised: "I will command my blessings upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years" (25:21).

- Hereditary lands and property were to be restored to the original family without compensation in the Year of Jubilee (25:24-34). In this manner all land and its improvements would eventually be restored to the original holders to whom God had given it, for He said, "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity; for the land is mine" (25:23).
- Freedom of bond-servants was to be effected in the Year of Jubilee. Every Israelite who had, because of poverty, subjected himself to bondage was to be set free (25:29 ff.).

Holiness: The Central Theme of the Book of Leviticus

The whole of the Book of Leviticus is dominated by the outworking, or actualization, of Exodus 19:6 - "and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Thus, central to an understanding of Leviticus is an understanding of what it means to be holy.

- Basic Meaning: The Hebrew term most commonly used in Leviticus to express the concept of holiness is qados(see Wenham 1992:18-25 for an informative discussion on holiness). Originally this term simply meant "separation", "set apart," specifically for religious purposes. In this sense, anything could be set apart for religious or cultic purposes - a piece of ground, a building, or furniture could be "holy." Certain persons were "holy" - set apart for religious purposes–whether priests in the service of Yahweh or the temple prostitutes of the Canaanite Baal cult. In contrast to what is "holy" there is the profane, or "common." Something is considered profane if it has a common use in the sense that it is not set apart for religious use. Profanity, then, is the taking of a holy thing (such as the name the Lord) and using it in a profane, or common, way.
- Biblical Meaning: The biblical concept of holiness, says LaSor (1990:152), is not limited to separation as repeated use is made of the words "Yahweh is holy" or "I (i.e., Yahweh) am holy." According to the basic sense of holy as noted above, this would mean that Yahweh is set apart. The question, however, is, what is He set apart from? The answer seems to be that God is set apart from sin, impurity, and sinful humanity. From the text of Genesis 1 & 2 it would seem that in part God created man in his likeness and image in order that man might have a personal relationship with God and enjoy fellowship with him. However sin broke that relationship and fellowship, and Adam and Eve were driven from

the Garden (Gen 3). In the aftermath of the Fall, man was barred from the presence of God because of sin. It is not difficult to see from this that Yahweh's moral excellence became part of the biblical concept of His holiness, and thus Biblical holiness came to have the derived meaning of moral excellence.

- The Laws of Practical Holiness: As discussed above, the underlying basis for Israel's need to be holy is found in the inherent nature of God as a holy being, that is, as a being of moral perfection. Fundamentally, therefore, those whom He calls to serve Him must be holy because He is holy (19:2). It is important here to recognize that Israel was not commanded to be holy as Yahweh is holy, but to be holy because He is holy. Thus, while God is the standard of holiness by which all others are measured, Israel was not called to walk in absolute holiness; the mere finiteness of the laws of holiness gives witness to that. While individual Israelites could approach Yahweh on the basis of the merits of the sacrifices (Lev 1-7), and the nation as a whole could be cleansed by means of the corporate act of repentance and forgiveness expressed in the ritual of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16), the people called to be a holy nation had to maintain that state in conduct as well as in decree. To effect this continual state of purity in covenant-relationship, the sons of Israel were to live out every day within the framework of a code of personal and national holiness - the so-called "Holiness Code" of Leviticus 17-26.
- The call to holiness involved regulations concerning the sanctity of the Tabernacle and blood (Lev 17), the prohibition of incest (18:1-18) and other sexual perversions (18:19-23), the keeping of the Ten Commandments (19:1-18) and related laws (19:19-20:27), and the proper behavior of the priests in private and public life (Lev 21-22). The people of Israel, as a holy nation, also had to understand that holiness required strict adherence to the holy convocations appointed by Yahweh (Lev 23-25), and to all the laws of the covenant (Lev 26), as well as faithfulness in keeping vows of consecration to Yahweh (Lev 27).

Chapter 7

Theology of the Sinaitic Covenant

The book of Exodus confronts us as a continuation of the covenant story. We are not doing any violence to the order of the narratives of Holy Scripture when we move on from Noah and Abraham to Moses and the Passover and the Exodus and Mount Sinai. This is how Exodus itself presents itself to us. For the whole action of the book of Exodus begins at this moment which is recorded for us in 2. 23: 'And it came to pass in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died; and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried and their appeal for help came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. And God saw the children of Israel and God took knowledge of them.' People were the object of the genocidal impulse of Pharaoh, and there the matter would have rested except that God remembered his covenant. The story of the book of Exodus is the continuation of the covenant theme.

After the covenant that God made with Noah and Abraham we come to God's covenant dealings with Moses and with Israel in Egypt and in that sequence of events which includes both Passover and Mount Sinai, (i) sacrifice is seen to be at the heart of covenant and is explained; (ii) law is seen to be at the heart of the covenant and is elaborated, so that in this Exodus covenant document you have the perfection of God's covenant dealings with his people. You have the covenant in its normative form. The promises remain constant and the other constituents are brought into their appropriate places and are given their full statement, their full explanation and their full elaboration.

1. The revelation of God in word and deed

Now 1 want to divide our consideration of Exodus 1-12 under two headings; the first is the revelation of God in word and deed. May I say how advisedly I put them in that order: word and deed? Exodus 1 - 12 is a source document on the nature of God's self revelation. When it has declared how God has revealed himself it is open to anyone to say !I see that it declares that, but I don't believe it.' It is not open to anybody to say 'I see that it declares that, but I think it should be otherwise.' A source document declares with authority. And Exodus 1 - 12 is a source document on the nature of the revelation.

How does God reveal himself? Now the current emphasis in Old Testament studies is on the God who acts. Revelation is by the acts of God; G.E. Wright has written a book under that title, God Who Acts. But the idea itself is considerably older than contemporary Old Testament theologians, and one of the most striking statements of this view; that God reveals himself by what he does is to be found in William Temple's book Nature, Man and God. Temple puts it in this way: 'There are no revealed truths; there are only truths of revelation.' The matter couldn't be put more crisply than that, though perhaps it might have been put a little more intelligibly; so let me tell you what he meant. 'There are no revealed truths': that is to say, God does not commit himself to propositions. 'There are only truths of revelation': that is to say, truths which arise from correct thinking about what God has done. God does not commit himself to propositions; he acts, and people - very often chosen and especially endowed people - contemplate those acts and say 'I see what God is doing, I sec what

God is like', and revelation comes by correct thinking about the acts of God. I won't bother to go on to explain at length how this view reflects on the nature of Holy Scripture, as this must be obvious to you; but in a word, Holy Scripture becomes the first of a potentially long chain of attempts to interpret the acts of God, and we can cut past Moses and freshly for ourselves contemplate the Exodus, perhaps arriving at a new interpretation.

Now I simply want to point out to you that that is not what Exodus 1-12 asserts happened, and you can make what you like out of the disparity between the narrative in Exodus and the assertions of current Old Testament theologians. Far be it from me to draw invidious comparisons! Exodus 1 - 12 insists that the word of God comes first and the deed of God follows, and that revelation is not contained in a word which arises by interpretation from a deed. Revelation consists rather in a word which is subsequently confirmed by a deed; and the words and deeds of God fit together in this snug system of confirmatory revelation whereby God commits himself verbally to what he proposes to do, and then confirms that as a veracious word from God by doing precisely what he said he would do. This is what happens in these opening chapters of Exodus. Moses is not an interpreter after the event; Moses is a man made wise before the event. And I would like to share with you the truths very briefly which God made known to Moses. (a) He stated to Moses that he was the God of the fathers and the God of the covenant, and that what he was proposing to do was in pursuance of that which he had already done. (b) Before anything else, God reveals himself as the God of holiness (Ex. 3. 5). It is interesting to note that this is in fact the first time in the Bible that holiness is directly ascribed to God. Although it's impossible for us as Bible-reading believers to read the Book of Genesis without calling God the Holy One, Genesis never does, and it is not until the event of the burning bush, as we call it, that holiness is directly associated with the Divine Presence. (c) God informs Moses that he purposes to bring his people out from Egypt: 'I know their sorrows and I am come down to deliver' (3. 7-8). (d) He makes Moses aware of Israel's position as God's adopted son. He informs him of the great truth of adoption, 'Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, my firstborn' (4. 21,22). Moses goes into Egypt with that awareness of the status of the people before God. (e) Moses is made aware of the actual course

that events will take. 'When thou goest back to Pharaoh see that thou do before Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put in thine hand' (4. 21). The first experience of Moses in Egypt will be an experience of performing divinely authorised wonders in which there will be no salvation; for the narrative goes on, 'I will hardened his heart and he will not let my people go.' So Moses is told that there is going to be an initial period in which the wondrous acts of God will only provoke an increasing opposition on the part of Pharaoh and the Egyptians; but matters will come to a head in a contest between the firstborn. 'I have said unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me; and thou hast refused to let him go: behold I will slay thy son, thy firstborn' (v. 23). The whole sequence of events is in principle stated there before Moses - the mighty deeds of God which provoke increasing opposition and the climatic deed in which it is either Pharaoh's firstborn of God's firstborn. Moses is made aware of at least that before he goes into the land of Egypt, and all that is brought to confirmatory certainty when it is fulfilled by the subsequent actions of God. (f) Moses is made aware that God is a God who purposes redemption. In Exodus 6 when the people are in Egypt and things look at their blackest God commits himself to redeem (Ex. 6: 6). This is the first time that the verb 'to redeem' is used in the Bible in what afterwards became its normative sense; indeed it is only used once at all in the book of Genesis. (g) But chief among all the things which God revealed to Moses before sending him into Egypt was the significance of his own name Yahweh. - 'I am Yahweh.'

It must be a commonplace to you that the name 'Yahweh', which appears in some Bibles as 'Jehovah' and in most Bibles as 'LORD', is related to the Hebrew verb 'to be'. But I think you will find it helpful just to understand a little bit about the significance of the verb 'to be' in Hebrew. Right through the Old Testament there is a phrase which must be very familiar to you. It occurs over and over again in the prophets, 'The word of the Lord came to...' now in Hebrew that is: 'The word of the Lord was to ...' The verb used is the verb 'to be', not a verb of motion but a verb of realistic experience. 'The word of God became a living reality to ...' Now allow your mind to dwell on that, so that you can savour the meaning of the verb 'to be' in Hebrew. It means living reality, living presence, not just some bare abstract idea of existence as compared with non-existence. And when God

focuses attention upon this divine name, 'I am Yahweh', he is saying, 'I am the God of living presence with my people'. And then when he opens out to Moses a theology and a sequence of events, what he is saying is this: 'This theology and this sequence of events may be taken as defining what I do in my living presence when I come to be among my people. I take them to be my adopted children. I work for them in terms of redemption. I overthrow and destroy their bonds and bring them out from the iron furnace of Egypt. I set in motion a series of events and I superintend them; I determine what will be the reaction to each event as it occurs, and I bring them to their appointed climax. I am the God whose living presence controls and governs all these things.' So even the hardening of their own heart is ascribed to the action of that same God who guarantees his living presence to his people. Just as the New Testament God revealed his final name to be the Holy Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the work of Jesus and preeminently in the work of Calvary and the Resurrection, so in the Old Testament God gives the paramount revelation of himself at that moment in Egypt when the blood of the lamb is shed. Then they know what the meaning is of this God whose name proclaims his living presence with his people, 'I am the God who is with you to redeem you and to overthrow your enemies.' So much then under our first heading, 'the revelation of God in word and deed'.

2. The redemptive activity of God in confirmation of his word We noted briefly and perhaps all too quickly in the prepositional revelation which God gave to Moses how he adopted his people and pledged himself to redeem them by breaking the power of Egypt and bringing them out from that power and into their own land.

Now we look at the redemptive activity of God in confirmation of that word to Moses.

Things happened in Egypt exactly as God said they would happen; that is to say Moses goes to Pharaoh and begins to perform the wonders which God commanded him to perform. The reaction of Pharaoh was as God said it would be; that is to say, this series of plagues, which turned out to be nine in all, effected no salvation. All they achieved was to increase the bondage. They did not ameliorate the situation; they worsened the situation until things reached the climax where Pharaoh broke off diplomatic negotiations with Moses. And

they reached that very dramatic moment in Exodus 10. 28, where Pharaoh dons himself with all his imperial majesty and says to Moses, 'Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in the day thou seest my face thou shalt die.' And he got remarkably small change from Moses who replied promptly, 'You have spoken well.' And the careful narrator draws a line across the narrative at this point (11. 10): 'And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land' - as though to say to us, 'You see, it happened precisely as God said it would happen.' So Moses is made aware that the moment of climax has come; it comes at the beginning of chapter 11, the contest of the firstborn, God's firstborn or Pharaoh's firstborn. But the contest of the firstborn, contrary to anything which has hitherto been told to us, is set in the context of the Passover.

Sinai the destination of the covenant people

We have been tracing the covenant narrative of the Old Testament from the first time that the word occurs in God's dealings with Noah, through Abraham to the normative establishment of the covenant through Moses with Israel at the Exodus time. And we noted that those who ate the Passover were committed to pilgrimage. They had no option but to go walking with God. The destination of that walk was Mount Sinai; covenant people were brought to the covenant place.

I would like to share two references straight away to show you that the sequence of narratives which centre on Mount Sinai can be embraced under the term 'covenant'. God's first word to his people when they arrived at the mountain, 'You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself.' (Ex. 19. 4) There is God's assertion that the covenant promise of Exodus 6. 6 has been kept. Then the text continues: 'Now therefore if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant....' You see, he begins to speak to them straight away as the covenant God addressing the covenant people in covenant terms. The end of the Sinai sequence is in chapter 24: 'And Moses took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath spoken will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'Behold the

blood of the covenant.....' (verse 7) The whole Sinai sequence of narratives is bracketed around with these two assertions that what happens here happens in pursuance of God's covenant dealings with his people.

We might have been inclined to think Mount Sinai was purely incidental. After all, were not the people bound for the land of Canaan, was not that their destination? It's worth giving just a moment's consideration to the fact that, though God was going to lead his people into the land of Canaan in fulfilment of his promise, Mount Sinai was in fact the primary destination towards which they were aiming when they left the land of Egypt.

Look back at a few references: in Exodus 3. 12, God speaks to the uncertain and hesitant Moses, 'But I will be with thee; and this shall be the token to thee that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.' To Moses the arrival at Mount Sinai and the worship of God there was the crown upon the whole enterprise. When that happened it would be to him a divine token that God had engineered the whole enterprise. Mount Sinai was for Moses the crown of the Exodus. Again in 3. 18, when Moses is sent to open diplomatic negotiations with Pharaohs 'Thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us: and now let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God.' This great sacrifice that would be offered was the primary destination of the people when they left the land of Egypt. Thirdly, look at chapter 13 verse 17, 'And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them....' There is the affirmation of divine leadership in the Exodus march. It is elaborated in verse 21: 'The LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, that they might go by day and by night: the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, departed not from before the people.' The journey was a journey under manifest divine leadership. It is a wonderful study in divine providence to read the narratives of Exodus 13 - 18, for they are narratives of almost unbroken difficulty; but the difficulties were no indication that God had forgotten his people. For was not the fiery pillar going before them? Were they cornered between the sea

and the Egyptians? Who put them there? God had. Did they lack water? Who brought them there? God did. Did they lack food? Who put them in that situation? God did. For the cloudy, fiery pillar walked before them all the time; it was a march which God was engineering. And we read in 13. 17, 'God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines, though that was near, for God said Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt; but God led the people about...' God managed this march out of his own perfect design for the people and he led them on course to Mount Sinai.

The place of law in the life of God's people

What does that mean for us as we seek to study these narratives as a covenant document? It means this; that the word of God to a redeemed people is a word of law. We are enabled by this simple observation of a sequence of events to get in biblical perspective the place of law in the life of the people of God. God brought them to Mount Sinai that he might declare his law to them. In the Old Testament, therefore, the law is not a ladder whereby the unsaved seek in vain to climb into the presence of God. The law is a divinely given pattern of life for those who have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb. These folk, who had rested underneath the sheltering blood and who were committed thereby to pilgrimage, discovered that the immediate objective of their pilgrimage was the place where they might hear God speak his word of law and of commandment. The law is a pattern of life which God sets before and upon a redeemed people. This is the place of law in the Old Testament. Is it not the place of law in the New Testament? Ought we not therefore as believers increasingly to forget the blank page between Malachi and Matthew and to read the Bible as one book proclaiming one message?

How did God set this law before the people? We see that it is the pattern of life for the redeemed. Look at one reference chosen almost at random out of many, but one I think which makes the answer to that question clear. Leviticus 19 is somewhat of a hotchpotch of a chapter; it is a place into which are gathered many diverse aspects of the law of God, for the law of God spoken through Moses was a comprehensive law, covering every aspect of his people's life. Notice first of all the point at which this chapter begins. 'Ye shall be holy; for I the LORD your God am holy.' (v. 2) The purpose of the law was to

make God's people like God himself. Now notice the echo that runs right through this chapter: at the end of verse 3: 'I am the LORD your God'; verse 10: 'I am the LORD your God'; verse 12 at the end of the verse: 'I am the LORD'; verse 14: 'I am the LORD', and so on right through the chapter. As God declares his law in summary form here to people, he reminds them over and over again that these commandments are not arbitrary. They could no more be otherwise than God himself could be otherwise. The law is that it is because God is who he is. The law comes out as a reflection of the divine nature and its design is to make God's people into the same image. Here then is an elaboration, an extension, of the idea that the law is a pattern of life for the redeemed. It's not just a pattern, but the perfect pattern of life for the redeemed, because it is the pattern which shows them how they are to live in the likeness of their God.

I put it this way for you. There are two images of God on earth: there is the image of God in man, and there is the image of God in the law of God. Now draw the proper biblical deduction from that. If a man is to manifest the image of God in which he has been made and to live a normative and truly human life, then he must deliberately pattern his life upon the law of God, because that law is the verbal statement of what God is like. The law is what it is because God is who he is, in order that man may become what he is. And that is the central place that Mount Sinai has in the covenant and in the total covenant document which is the Holy Scriptures.

Approaching the unapproachable God through the blood of the covenant

Now we return to Exodus 19. Mount Sinai spoke with a yes and a no to the people of God. The whole Exodus narrative is between two brackets. The first bracket is found in chapter 3 in the incident of the burning bush: 'Moses said, I will turn aside and see this great sight why the bush is not burnt: And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the bush and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I, and he said, Draw not nigh hither' (3. 3,4). Now when they came to Mount Sinai they found the burning bush on a large scale, for it was the whole of Mount Sinai that was aflame and smoking. 'And Mount Sinai was altogether shrouded in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire,' (Ex. 19. 18) What wonderful continuity of symbolism there is in the Bible! Abraham

saw it in tiny form - the furnace that smoked and flashed; Moses saw it in a private preview - the flame of fire in the midst of the bush; and here it is in its awesome reality with the whole mountain flaming and smoking up into heaven. The people of God also knew it in daily experience as they walked behind the cloudy, fiery pillar. Continuity of symbolism binds the narratives together.

But while God came down to be amongst his people, there is the same ambivalence that there is in Exodus 3. 'Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God' (Ex. 19. 17). But 'Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for thou didst charge us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it' (v. 23) and 'Let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD.' (v. 24) In Exodus 3 God called Moses, and when Moses responded God said, 'Don't come'; in Exodus 19 Moses brings out the people by divine invitation to meet God, and God says, 'Don't let them come near'. So there is a yes and a no at Mount Sinai. There is a yes, 'Come and meet God', and there is a no, 'You cannot meet God'. Mount Sinai speaks with a double voice. It speaks of a people who are brought near, and it speaks of a mountain with a fence round it whereby they cannot come near.

This situation is solved in the covenant ceremony, and we must consider Exodus 24. 4-8. 'And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the mount, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath spoken will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you on the basis of all these words.' A yes and a no is what we find in Exodus 19: 'I have brought you to myself, but don't come near me.' But now see the situation which emerges in Exodus 24. First of all we have the symbol of covenant reality: 'Moses rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the mount, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel' (v. 4). It is a symbol, but it is a clear symbol; and

Moses goes about to explain it to us. The twelve pillars are the twelve tribes who are gathered round the altar. The covenant promise has been kept; God has brought his people to himself, and there he is in the midst of his gathered people. The covenant has been fulfilled, and there it is in symbolic reality.

But how is this reality to work out, if there is the yes and the no at Mount Sinai? If God is saying 'Yes come to me, no don't come to me', if God in his covenant mercies is drawing people to himself, but in his ineffable holiness is repelling people from himself, how is this covenant symbol to become a reality? Look at what verses 5 and 6 say about the blood of the covenant Godward: 'And he sent young men of the chosen of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it into basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.' In the symbol God is present as the altar; he is symbolised as one who is present in the midst of his people in terms of sacrifice and blood. And Moses lives out that symbolism now by taking half of the blood and making it exercise its influence Godward, sprinkling it on the altar, reaching back to the Passover blood. The Passover blood, as we saw in our last study, exercised its primary influence towards God in propitiation; the holy God was turned from the wrath which was proper to him, and there was peace between him and the people who were beneath the sheltering blood. And I guess this is why the sacrifices specified here are burnt offerings and peace offerings, two thirds of the Levitical system. The missing sacrifice was the sin offering, the offering which paramountly made peace between sinners and a holy God; I offer you the suggestion that what Moses is doing here is bringing into full expression that which was first expressed in the Passover sacrifice in the land of Egypt. There peace was established with a holy God; all that is necessary now in order to present the blood of the covenant is to bring that to its fullness by the offering of burnt offerings and peace offerings.

The blood moves first Godward in propitiation, but then, secondly, manward. 'And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the hearing of the people: and they said, 'All that the LORD has spoken will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people.' (vs. 7 and 8). On what people did he sprinkle it? At

what precise moment did that sprinkling of blood occur? At the moment when they committed themselves to a life of obedience. First comes the commitment to obedience according to the Lord God, 'All that the LORD has said we will do, and we will be obedient', then the sprinkling of the blood manward. And what does that mean? It means that just as the blood of the covenant on the one hand establishes the relationship of peace with God by propitiation, so on the other hand the blood of the covenant maintains the relationship of peace with God for a people who are committed to walk in obedience. God knows that the people are professing beyond their strength; 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.' 'They have well said in what they have said. O that there were such an heart in them, that they would… keep all my commandments always.' (Deut. 5. 28ff) But they are professing beyond their ability. 'Very well', says God, 'I will make a provision for them.' The same blood which has made peace with God will keep peace with God. As they walk in the way of obedience, the blood is available for a people committed to obey. As they stumble and fall, so the covenant blood will be available for them. Note two things quickly by way of comment on that situation:

(i) ***The nature of Old Testament religion*** Old Testament religion is a complex of grace, law and grace. Let your mind go back over what we have seen together in Exodus; we have seen the grace that brought them out of the land of Egypt, the law that was spoken to them because they were redeemed people and the grace that was made available for them as they committed themselves to a life of obedience. Notice how this solves thorny problems which have been raised by Old Testament specialists: e.g., the supposition that there was a battle in Israel between those who thought that religion was purely a matter of the cult and the sacrifices and those who thought that religion was purely a matter of ethical observance. It cannot be so because the Sinaitic Mosaic ground work of Old Testament religion is the binding together of grace, law and grace, the binding together of the commitment to obedience and the blood of sacrifice. Naturally when the prophets found that sacrifices were getting out of place, they countered that by reasserting the priorities for the people of God. The prior call was to holiness and within that context the blood of sacrifice makes provision for the lapses of the people. It is round this point that the totality of Old Testament religion finds its unity.

(ii) ***The unity of the Old Testament and the New Testament***
1 John 2. 1,2 reads 'My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.' People of God under the new covenant have no permission to sin; they are summoned to a life of holiness; 'All that the LORD has said we will do and be obedient.' 'But if any man sin we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins'; God has made a provision whereby those who are committed to obedience may, in spite of their disobedience, still be kept at peace with God and maintained in the covenant relationship. Is it not so that the whole of the Bible speaks with one voice?

We have tried to see the place of law in the life of the people of God. The law is not a standard set before unbelievers whereby they may struggle and strive to get to heaven; it is the pattern of life given to those who have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb, given to them that they may be like their God. There is an interesting point to observe in Exodus 19 and 20: when God begins to declare his law to his people, he says 'I am the LORD who brought you… out of the house of bondage.' The law that God gives is not a bondage; it is a life for free men. They are out of bondage, and God's law will keep them out of bondage. They will live the life of free men in the pattern of their God. We saw secondly how Mount Sinai posed a great tension between God's welcome of his people and the impossibility of sinners coming into the presence of a holy God. This tension was solved by blood: the blood moving Godward in propitiation, the blood moving manward in preservation, maintaining the people of God in the fellowship of God.

The efficacy of the blood

Now we move on to take up the thought of the efficacy of the blood. I would like you to notice first of all the sequence of events which binds the book of Exodus and the book of Leviticus together. The second half of the book of Exodus is concerned with the plans for the tabernacle and the setting up of the tabernacle. Let us look first of all at chapter 29. 44, 'I will sanctify the tent of meeting, and the altar: Aaron also and his sons will I sanctify, to minister to me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and I will be their God.' The tabernacle is central to God's covenant

dealings with his people. This is the covenant promise - that 'they should be my people and I will be their God' - and the tabernacle is the visible focus of the covenant - 'I will dwell among the children of Israel, and be their God. They shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, in order that I might dwell among them.' God's tabernacle is the climax of redemption; he brought them out of Egypt for this very purpose that he might dwell among them. Don't weary over all those tedious details to do with the tabernacle; they are describing to you the climax of God's redemptive covenant programme for his people. The second half of the book of Exodus is integral to the Exodus story and must not be separated from it.

Well then, with what anticipation the people must have looked forward to the setting up of the tabernacle! This was the climax, this was the covenant in operation, God's coming to live at No. 10 - his tent amongst all the other tents, God in the midst of his people. Consider the situation at the end of Exodus: 'Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle' (40. 34). God had taken up residence in the midst of his people. But in v. 35 we read: 'And Moses was not able to enter...' So here again is the same tension; God is present but is not available; he is next door but not a neighbour. Moses was not able to enter.

How is this situation resolved? Look at Leviticus 1. 1 'The LORD called unto Moses, and spoke unto him out of the tent of meeting, saying 'Speak unto the children of Israel and say 'When any man offers an oblation unto the LORD...' Now let me put that literally for you: 'Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when any man brings near that which is brought near'. The glory banishes, but the sacrifices unite; the people cannot enter, but they can come near. This is the place of the sacrificial code in the life of the people of God; the sacrifices are designed to maintain a redeemed people in close knit fellowship with their God.

The sacrifices are not available to the unconverted. If a man joined the people of God under the old covenant, he signalised that joining by circumcision and Passover. He had come in on the ground level of the covenant, and then he could offer the sacrifices. He had to participate in that which is the model of the one sacrifice for sins for

ever. The Passover is that model, because it is an Egypt sacrifice. The Passover can only be sacrificed in Egypt, because it is designed to get the people out of Egypt. Once they are out it can only be remembered; it cannot be repeated. Therefore the Passover is the model of the one sacrifice for sins for ever. It is the model of Calvary, and if a man joins himself to the people of God he must come in at that point; then the other sacrifices become available to him. They are to maintain the redeemed in fellowship with God, just as the blood of Jesus Christ his Son keeps on cleansing us from all sin. Just as that one sacrifice at Calvary is endlessly efficacious to maintain us in fellowship with God, so under the old covenant the blood of the covenant which was offered normatively in Egypt is endlessly available in terms of the Levitical sacrifices to maintain the redeemed people in fellowship with God. 'A man brings near that which is brought near.' There in one sentence is the whole meaning of the Levitical sacrificial code in its threefold division of burnt offerings, peace offerings and sin offerings.

We must now concentrate in brief on two features of those sacrifices, though it is beneficial to dwell on them in detail when you have opportunity. The sacrificial system was a complex one with three categories of sacrifice: burnt offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings. But running through its complexity and common to all its categories, there were two features. Every time they happened, no matter what sacrifice was brought, the offerer had to lay his hand upon the head of his offering and there had to be a certain ceremonial to deal with the blood that was shed when the animal was killed. Now let me add a couple of sentences by way of illumination concerning each of those.

(a) The laying on of hands

It is mentioned for example in Leviticus 1. 4, 'He shall lay his hand upon the head of the burnt offering', and you will find a similar reference for each of the other types of offering in Leviticus 3. 2 and 4. 4. Now for an illustration of this, look first of all in the book of Numbers 8. 11-16. Verse 11 reads 'And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for a wave offering, separating them from among the children of Israel that they may be to do the service of the Lord.' Verse 16 reads: 'For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel, instead of all that openeth the womb, even the

firstborn of all the children of Israel...' Notice the phrase 'instead of'. The Levites were taken in substitution for the people to do in their place the service of the Lord. How was the relationship symbolised? 'Thou shalt present the Levites before the LORD; and the children of Israel shall lay their hands upon the Levites' (v. 10). The laying on of hands appointed the Levites to stand in a certain relationship to the people who performed the laying on of hands; they were appointed to stand in their place to fulfil certain functions on their behalf. Look now at Leviticus 16. 21-22: 'Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat.' What does the laying on of hands now signify? It signifies the transference of sin and guilt. Bring these two thoughts back illustratively to the symbolism of the laying on of hands in the Levitical sacrifices. What was the offerer doing when he laid his hands upon the head of the animal? He was appointing one to stand in his place, and where necessary he was off-loading on to the animal all his iniquities, transgressions and sins as in the case of the sin offering. The symbolism of the laying on of hands is the symbolism of the appointment of a substitute.

(b) The meaning of blood

The key verse here is Leviticus 17. 11. It is one of the few verses in the Old Testament which set out to explain the efficacy of the sacrifices. 'The life of the flesh is the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement by reason of the life.' According to this verse, what is the meaning of the blood? What is the efficacy?

May I say two things: (i) the significance of the blood must be consistent with the function of the blood: it must have a meaning consistent with what it is intended to do. Now the function of the blood is stated here: 'I have given it to you… to make atonement.' The sacrifices are not a human expedient; they are a divine provision. The blood must have a meaning that enables it to fulfil the function of making atonement.

What does the making of atonement mean? If you want the work done for you, you will find it Dr. Leon Morris' book The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross. If you want to do the work for yourself, you

can do it by means of Young's Analytical Concordance. Look up the verb 'to make atonement' and the noun 'atonement'. The noun, which is of course the first cousin to the verb - in fact it is more correct to say that the verb in this case is a first cousin to the noun - has the consistent meaning of 'paying a ransom price', 'making a payment that is appropriate to discharge a certain indebtedness'. The verb 'to make atonement' means the making of such a payment. So the blood makes a payment; it envisages indebtedness and it discharges a debt. May I remark that the basic literal meaning of the verb is to hide? Allow the Passover to be your illustration: the people hid beneath the blood. But it is not consistent with the divine nature to sweep sin under the carpet and hide it merely out of sight. That is not a dealing with sin; that is a conniving with sin. And so when God hides his sinful people out of sight, he hides them by means of a payment that is satisfactory to discharge their indebtedness. On Passover night the wages of sin was death; and so the payment which will discharge their indebtedness is the payment of a life laid down in death, exactly as the Passover lamb was the dead one in each Israelite household on Passover night. So the efficacy of that death is prolonged by means of the threefold system of sacrifices. The meaning of the blood must be consistent with the function it is to perform, and if it is to perform the paying of a debt, then the blood can only be significant of a life terminated; it can only mean that death has taken place.

(ii) The life of the flesh is laid down as an equivalent payment for the debt incurred by sin. The life of the flesh is in the blood. The life of the flesh is life as we know it, here and now. It means life as constituted in this bodily existence, life as we possess it in this world, the life that is common to man and beast and all flesh. When the blood is shed, that life is terminated and laid down as a payment for sin. The last phrase of Leviticus 17: 11 fits ideally into that interpretation; literally translated the phrase is: 'For the blood makes atonement by the life'. 'By the life' is exactly the same expression as that found in Deut. 19. 21, when Moses announces the fundamental legal precept for all time? 'Thine eyes shall not pity, life shall go for life'. It is a preposition (in Hebrew) of exact equivalence and one that is used in commercial transactions as well as in legal transactions - the exact equivalent of one thing for another or of its price or its value or its payment. We ought therefore to translate the latter part of Leviticus

17. 11: 'The blood makes atonement at the expense of the life', the life being laid down as the price or debt incurred by the sinner before God. Thus the sacrifices are a divine provision to maintain a redeemed people in fellowship with their God; but they do so by prolonging amongst the people of God the virtues and the meaning of the initial sacrifice, where life went for life and on the basis of substitution God was propitiated and God's people were made secure.

Covenant to Come

Within the Old Testament there is an envisaged perfection of the covenant. Jeremiah was the man who used the expression 'the new covenant' (Jer. 31. 31), but the idea of the new covenant is much more widespread than the expression; and while Jeremiah used the words, he was by no means the only one to speak of the thing. The root of the idea of an envisaged perfection of the covenant was planted by Moses. It is planted in what is, at first sight, very unpromising ground, and you will realise why I say that when I tell you that the first main heading of this study is:

This is spoken of in two main passages in the Pentateuch. The first one is Leviticus 26. The passage begins in verse 14, where Moses alludes to the possibility that at the human end the covenant may be broken. He speaks in verses 14 and 15 of the people failing to do all these commandments, 'rejecting my statutes, abhorring my judgments and breaking my covenant'. Now when that situation arises and the people of God reject the covenant precepts, then this is the situation which emerges: 'I will bring a sword upon you which will execute the vengeance of the covenant' (v. 25). That is to say, on man's side, there is not a repudiation of the covenant, but an act of vengeance within the covenant. The vengeance is not alien to the covenant, nor does it nullify it; rather it belongs to it.

The heart of the problem which brings about this situation is described to us in verse 41: The people have walked contrary to God, and he responds, 'I also walked contrary unto them, and brought them into the land of their enemies: if then their uncircumcised heart be humbled....' There is the problem - their heart is uncircumcised. That is to say, in some way which I don't think the Old Testament or the New Testament specifies at any point, the promises of God have not got through the place that matters.

But in this situation where the vengeance of the covenant is in operation because of the uncircumcised heart, God has by no means abandoned his purposes or come to the end of his resources. Verse 42 reads: 'Then I will remember my covenant with Jacob; and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember, and I will remember the land.' God remembers his covenant. 'I will not reject them. Neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant' (vv. 44-45). They may break the covenant; but he won't, 'for I am the LORD their God.' In other words, he meant what he said, when he said 'this is my name for ever, this is how I am to be remembered to all generations' (Ex. 3. 15); Yahweh is the name of the covenant God. That name doesn't change, and therefore the covenant is for ever secure at his end.

Now look at the other passages in which this theme of envisaged future divine covenant action is brought before us. Look at Deuteronomy 29. 12: 'That thou shouldst enter into the covenant of the LORD thy God and into his curse.' The Revised Version says 'into his oath', but the Hebrew says 'into his curse'. The covenant is described as a curse. The expression is very striking, but clearly the implication emerges that it is a curse in the sense that, when at the human end the covenant is violated, a system of cursing goes into operation within the covenant. It is not contrary to it, not in breach of it, to nullify it, but it is within its working organisation, so that the covenant can be called directly in Deuteronomy 29. 12 'his curse', the curse which he utters. Again look in verse 21; 'The LORD shall separate him [that is the disobedient man] unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant' - not the curses which nullify the covenant, not the curses which operate against it, but the curses which are embraced within it. Verse 27 refers to the curse within the covenant document: 'Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curse that is written in this book'.

Now what does God do in that situation? Chapter 30 tells us: 'And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, that then

the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity'. (vv. 1-3), 'The LORD thy God will gather thee' (v. 4). 'The LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed.' (v. 5) 'The LORD thy God will circumcise thy heart.' (v. 6) The defect which was noticed in Leviticus is remedied in Deuteronomy. The Lord envisages a covenant action which will reach into the heart where the failure took place, an action which will remedy that wherein the defect was discerned and bring his people into a new place of covenant blessing.

Let me pass a series of remarks very quickly upon the idea of the vengeance or curse of the covenant.

(i) It is often asserted that Amos achieved notoriety and became the first prophet whose messages were written down because he had the daring to predict the termination of the covenant relationship. Amos did not preach the termination of the covenant relationship; he preached the onset of the vengeance of the covenant. The Old Testament takes itself seriously.

(ii) The point of failure which prompts the onset of the curses of the covenant is the failure in the heart of man, the uncircumcised heart. That is where the remedy needs to be applied.

(iii) The curses of the covenant were built in to the historical life of the people of God. Deuteronomy 27 commands that, when the people enter the land which God promises them, they shall identify two mountains in the land - two established, immovable features of the landscape - with respectively the blessings and the curses of the covenant. They are to identify Mount Gerizim with the blessings and Mount Ebal with the cursings. Notice they do not identify those mountains respectively with obedience and disobedience; they identify them with the rewards of obedience and disobedience, blessings and cursings, so that they live with these perpetual immovable reminders that the covenant God will thus act towards his people. These mountains represent the covenant: it is itself immovable, but it can without changing its nature act towards the people of God to bring blessing or to bring vengeance. It was, of course, of this that Amos was speaking. I want you to notice that there's a most beautiful touch in Deuteronomy 27 and Joshua 8 when the ordinances concerning Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim are laid down: Mount Ebal is identified with cursing, but is on Mount Ebal that the altar is to be built. That is

to say, God enters into this situation where the curses of the covenant operate; and that reaches right back to the institution of the covenant with Abraham when it was God alone who marched between the severed carcasses and thereby took upon himself the total obligation of the broken covenant. So the altar is built not on Mount Gerizim in the place of blessing, but upon Mount Ebal in the place of cursing, for that is the place into which the covenant God will eventually enter, as Paul tells us in Galatians 3. 13. There was a failure, and when Moses discovered the point of failure he envisaged the future perfection.

2. The Failure of the Covenant Institutions

We may place that clue for a moment and for the second element in our study take up the theme of the failure of the covenant institutions. I would like to suggest that right throughout the story of the covenant it was at the point of failure that hope was prompted. I want to mention two things briefly and dwell in more detail on the third.

(a) The Covenant Priesthood Within the main covenant of God, there was a particular covenant which God made with the priesthood. It is mentioned to us in Numbers 25. 10. Because of the courageous action of Phineas, who identified himself with God and who was, as the text says, 'jealous with my jealousy', he received from God a covenant - 'Behold I will give him my covenant of peace; and it shall be unto him, and to his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood' (v. 12). Within the main covenant ordinance the priesthood was in receipt of a special covenant.

When you trace this through, you find a history of failure. The priests allowed their priestly privilege to be corrupted into a superstitious ritualism, and therefore they came under the prophetic flail. There are a series of remarkable passages not only in the pre-exilic prophets in which the priesthood comes under the prophetic flail for becoming a superstitious ordinance cultivating a merely ritualistic and ex opere operato approach to God. But that wasn't their only failure. Malachi at the very end of the prophetic movement looks at the priesthood in his day - the priests, incidentally, who are supposed to have been high-minded enough to have produced the 'P' document - and he finds them very far from the priesthood that God intended. See particularly 2. 5-7: 'My covenant with him was of life and peace; and I gave them to him as something to reverence, and he feared me, and

stood in awe of my name. The law of truth was in his mouth; deviation was not found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth.' The priest was to be amongst the people of God as a teacher of the instruction of God, the law - 'for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But ye are turned aside out of the way.' The priests had not only corrupted their God-given ritual into a superstition, but they had abandoned and corrupted their office of teacher. The covenant institution of priesthood was a failure.

(b) The Covenant Institution of the Tabernacle (or later as it became, the temple). This symbolised the perfect indwelling of God amongst his people guaranteeing their security. This is the message which Zechariah brings in chapter 2 of his prophecy. A young man runs out with a measuring rod to measure the ruins of Jerusalem. He wants to determine the future by the measurements of the past. He wants to limit the coming Glory to the glory of David and Solomon. He wants the security of a wall around the people of God. And the reply of Zechariah is that there is a coming glory which would outshine and outmeasure anything that has gone before, and that there is no need of a wall, because God himself is dwelling in the midst of his people. In 2: 5 he says, 'I will be the glory in the midst of her'. In verse 10, 'I will dwell in the midst of thee', and in verse 11, 'I will dwell in the midst of thee', and because of that divine indwelling there is no need of a wall. 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited as unwalled villages' (v. 4).

But yet both the tabernacle and the temple were destroyed. There is need of a greater indwelling of God. For somehow or other - here is a topic on which I believe Scripture does not make the thing plain to us - there is a perfection which was yet to be and which was not realised in the old institutions, else they could not have fallen. Of course part of the reason that they fell was that the people corrupted them. Jeremiah tells us in 7. 11 that they had made the house of God into a den of robbers. A den of robbers is a place to which an ungodly, dishonest, immoral person runs for safety and from which he comes utterly unchanged. He goes to a port of reformation and he comes from it unreformed to get on with his nefarious deeds. And they thought that the house of God could be used without reference to moral

reformation. So in the failure of temple and tabernacle we have a dovetailing of two points of failure -failure of the institution and failure in the corruption of the human heart. There is need of a fuller, more complete and more operative indwelling of God; and there is need of a reformation in the heart of man, whereby he will see and respect the holiness of the divine indweller.

Nevertheless, the vision of the perfect tabernacle, of the perfect temple, was never lost, and it shines out so clearly, for example in the teaching of Micah: 'Zion for your sake shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest. But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established' (3:12, 4:1)... The vision was never lost, even though the glory had not yet been fully and properly realised.

The Perfection of Monarchy in the Person of the Divine David

I say to you without any hesitation at all the two words 'divine David'. It seems to me to be a great misunderstanding of the Old Testament which tries to retranslate the crux in Psalm 45, the royal wedding Psalm. That royal wedding Psalm reads in verse 6, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.' So the Davidic king was addressed on his wedding day, 'thy throne O God.' It goes on to say in verse 7, 'Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; therefore God, who is thy God, has anointed thee.' The Old Testament is taking account of a concept which it cannot wholly organise. If it takes seriously the covenant promise, 'He shall be my son', then it must address its king as God. But since he is manifestly not God, it must safeguard the concept and live in a conscious tension, by making it clear in the immediately following verse that God is his God also. The Old Testament does not and cannot resolve that tension, but it never loses its grip on the divine Messiah. See Isaiah 9. 6-7: the child who is to be born is the prince with the fourfold name; his name shall be called 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God'. In chapter 10 verse 21 Isaiah uses that identical expression of Yahweh himself; the translation 'Mighty God' cannot be resisted at that point, and we ought not under dogmatic pressure of prejudice to alter the translation here. We must learn to take the Bible seriously and to work out its problems in its terms and not ours. The passage that makes it clear that he is to

sit upon the throne of David and therefore to be the promised son of David asserts that he is the Mighty God.

Look next at Jeremiah 23. 5 and 6 where David is again the subject. 'Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch.' The word 'branch' in these contexts has a family tree connotation. We don't think it's odd to speak of a family tree; we ought not therefore to think it odd to call a person a branch. It is a way of saying 'that which springs out from something else', and the branch springs out of David; he has a veritable human Davidic ancestry, 'He will reign as King and deal wisely, and execute judgment… In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name by which he shall be called, The Lord is our righteousness.' The same hint comes in Isaiah 11: 'There shall come a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots.' (There's a different Hebrew word for branch here, but the significance is the same. It should have been a different translation.) That is to say, out of the line of David there will come this perfect King on whom the spirit of God will rest in fulness. Notice an odd thing in Isaiah 11: the branch springs out of the stock of Jesse in verse 1, but in verse 10 he is called the root of Jesse. Whereas by the way of family tree he springs out of Jesse's line, in reality Jesse exists for the purposes of the branch. The branch comes before the tree. He is the root from which Jesse comes - the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star, To follow up this theme, 'the perfection of the monarchy in the divine David', bring in all those great references that there are in the Psalms.

(c) The Perfection of Priestly Ministry in the Lord's Servant

We turn here to Isaiah 53. May I introduce you briefly to the relationship between chapters 53 and 54? Take the topics in chapter 54 as they arise: 'Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate.' (54. 1) The topic is children without travail, children who have been born by some other means than human, How have such children come to birth? The answer is in chapter 53: 'he shall see his seed' (v. 10). 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied' (v. 11), Out of the work of the servant there come these children born not by natural agency. Then look at chapter 54. 10: 'Neither shall my covenant of peace totter or shake'; the

covenant of peace is the second theme in chapter 54. Where does it arise from? From the fact that the chastisement which brought peace to us was laid upon him and by his stripes we are healed (53. 5). Once more chapter 54 describes that which emerges out of chapter 53. The third element in chapter 54 is righteousness; it is mentioned in verse 14, 'In righteousness shalt thou be established', and again in verse 17 at the end of the verse, 'This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness comes from me'. It is not a righteousness of their own; it is a righteousness which comes to them from God. What is the root of that righteousness? See chapter 53. 11; 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant provide righteousness for many'. Excuse a little bit of personal translation, but that is what it means. 'By his knowledge shall my servant, the righteous one, provide righteousness for many.' Here is the doctrine of imputed righteousness in the Old Testament coming out of this priestly work of substitution, when he takes upon himself our iniquities, transgressions and sins, when he is wounded for our transgressions. May I tell you that the word 'for' in verse 5 'he was wounded for our transgressions' describes an effect that arises out of a cause? 'He was wounded out of our transgressions', he was wounded because of our transgressions'. All the transgression was on my side and all the penalty was on his side. This is the priestly work of the servant of God doing that which the lamb did in Egypt, standing in for the people of God. And out of that there comes an imputed righteousness, children who are born without human agency, a covenant of peace. Who is this servant? 'He is the arm of Yahweh' (v. 1). That is to say he is Yahweh himself come to take personal action. Compare chapter 52. 10: 'The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations.' God has rolled up his sleeve. When the servant comes as the arm of Yahweh, he comes as God with his sleeves rolled up, himself to perform this tremendous work of substitution and priestly offering whereby the people of God supernaturally born inherit a covenant of peace and are established in righteousness. This brings us to our third point.

The Perfection of Regeneration by a Final Dealing with Sin

Moses saw that the covenant failure had to do with the heart of man, and Isaiah in the passage just referred to spoke of people being

established in righteousness. But it fell to Jeremiah to be the one to spell this point out in the fullest Old Testament detail; he does so in his new covenant passage, Jeremiah 31. 31: 'Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they broke.' There's the failure, 'they broke'. Though I was a husband to them, the failure was not on my side but on their side. What does God do when man cannot rise to the height of obligation? Does he lower the obligation? No. He lifts up the man, and this is what Jeremiah says: 'But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days… I will put my laws in their inward parts, and on their heart will I write it.' What did Moses say? 'Your heart was uncircumcised.' What did he promise? God will circumcise your heart. What did it mean? God will come and he will so transform that human heart that in its per nature it becomes a replica of the law of God, so that obedience and not disobedience becomes the natural life of God's people. That's regeneration - the gift of a new nature by the work and act of God. Jeremiah knits his great prophecy of the regenerate people in the new covenant into what Isaiah has told, because he makes it all to arise from a final dealing with sin, 'For they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: because I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.' (v. 34f) When God forgets it, then it is finished; this is the final dealing with sin.

(d) The Perfection of Divine Indwelling Secured by Princely Mediation

This is the covenant vision of the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel takes up the failure of the tabernacle and says that God is going to set that right. 'Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them.' (Ezk. 37. 26) He latches on to what Isaiah predicted, 'It shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them, and multiply them, and I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people'. The covenant promise is fulfilled in terms of an envisaged perfect indwelling of God in the midst of his people.

The temple passage in Ezekiel chapters 40-48 is a spelling out at length of the reality and the security and the blessings that ensue when God perfectly tabernacles in the midst of his people, 'All the people of the land shall give unto this oblation for the prince in Israel. And it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, and the meat offerings, and the drink offerings, in the feasts and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering and the peace offerings, to make atonement for the house of Israel.' (45. 16-17). It all depends upon the activity of this prince who is manifestly also a priest and upon his mediation - the prince's portion surrounds the dwelling place of God and the people's portion surrounds the portion of the prince. As perpetual mediator, he perpetually secures for the people of God the benefits of the burnt offering, the peace offering and the sin offering, the virtues of the blood of the covenant. By the princely mediation the dwelling place of God is with his people, and they inherit the benefits and blessings of that which was long envisaged but not previously accomplished, that the people of God should become the temple of the Holy Ghost.

Chapter 8

Book of Numbers

The Book of Numbers (from Greek ; Hebrew:, "In the desert [of]") is the fourth book of the Hebrew Bible, and the fourth of five books of the Jewish The Hebrew title is áîãáøý, *BYmidbar* or "In the Wilderness" (of Sinai?). The Greek title in the translation of the OT (LXX) was ñéèìïß, *Arithmoi* emphasizing the lists of numbers recorded in the book (1- 4; 26). The Latin Vulgate picked up on the Greek title and named the book *Numeri* from which the English acquires the name numbers. The Greek and Vulgate titles, are probably derived from the oldest Hebrew title *homesh ha-pekudim* 'the fifth of the Torah the numbered (Mish. Yoma 7:1, Mish. Men. 4:3), i.e., because of the several censuses recorded in the book (chaps. 1-4,26).

Chronological Setting:

- The Passover occurred on the fourteenth day of the first month of the year and the nation departed from Egypt on the fifteenth day of the first month (Num 33:3; Ex 12:2, 6)

- The tabernacle was erected at Mount Sinai exactly one year after the Exodus (on the first day of the first month of the second year; Ex 40:2, 17)
- One month later the nation prepared to leave Sinai for the Promised Land (on the first day of the second month of the second year; Num 1:1)
- On the twentieth day of the second month of the second year "the cloud was lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony and the sons of Israel went out on their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai" (Num 10:11-12).
- Deuteronomy opens with a reference to the first day of the eleventh month of the 40th year. This is 38 years, eight months and ten days after the nation departed from Sinai (Dt 1:3; cf. Num 10:11-12)Therefore, Numbers covers a period of time known as the wilderness wanderings which lasted 38 years, nine months and ten days.

The following timetable for events after the Exodus can be accepted:

Exodus from Egypt	15th day of 1st month	Exod. 12:2, 5; Num.33:3
Arrival at Mount Sinai	1st day of 3d month	Exod. 19:1
Yahweh reveals himself at Sinai	3d day of 3d month	Exod. 19:16
Completion of tabernacle	1st day of 1st month of 2d year	Num. 1:1
Command to number Israel	1st day of 2d month of 2d year	Num. 10:11
Departure from Sinai	20th day of 2d month of 2d year	Num. 1:1
Arrival at Kadesh	1st month of 40th year?	Num. 20:1

Death of Miriam	1st month of 40th year?	Num. 20:1
Death of Aaron and thirty days of mourning	1st day of 5th month of 40th year	Num. 20:29
Departure for Moab	1st day of 6th month of 40th year?	Num 20:22; 21:4
Moses Addresses Israel in Moab	1st day of 11th month of 40th year	Deut. 1:2-3
Death of Moses and thirty days of mourning?		Deut. 34:8
Joshua and Israel enter Canaan	10th day of 1st month of 41st year	Josh. 1:19

Critical Concerns:

A. Mosaic Authorship:

Although many critics questions Mosaic authorship of Numbers because of their view of sources in the book, it is better in view of their underlying assumptions of JEDP and the supporting historical evidence to give the book the benefit of the doubt and assume Mosaic authorship which was then edited at later times into its present canonical form.

B. Numbers in Numbers:

1. The design of the census in Numbers:
   * To ascertain and recruit manpower for war (Num 1:3)
   * To allot work assignments in the forced labor gangs and the religious cult (Num 3:4)
   * To establish a basis for taxation (cf. Ex 30:11-16)
   * To order the Hebrew tribes in marching and camping formations (Num 2)
   * To contribute to the organization of former slaves into a unified people

2. Two census are taken in Numbers (1; 26):

* The first census was taken in the second month of the second year after the Exodus (Num 1:1) numbering the first generation of post-Exodus Israelites
* The second census was taken in the fortieth year after the Exodus numbering the second generation of post-Exodus Israelites (Num 20:1, 22-29; 33:38)

Both census were taken of Israelite men who were of fighting age (twenty years of age and older) Num 1:1-4; 26:1-4.

Census Figures in Num 1 and 26

Tribe	Reference	Figures	Reference	Figures
Reuben	1:20-21	46,500	26:5-11	43,730
Simeon	1:22-23	59,300	26:12-14	22,200
Gad	1:24-25	45,650	26:15-18	40,500
Judah	1:26-27	74,600	26:19-22	76,500
Issachar	1:28-29	54,400	26:23-25	64,300
Zebulun	1:30-31	57,400	26:26-27	60,500
Ephraim	1:32-33	40,500	26:35-37	32,500
Manasseh	1:34-35	32,200	26:28-34	52,700
Benjamin	1:36-37	35,400	26:38-41	45,600
Dan	1:38-39	62,700	36:42-43	64,400
Asher	1:40-41	41,500	36:44-47	53,400
Naphatali	1:42-43	53,400	26:48-50	45,400
Totals		603,550		601,730
Average		50,296		50,144
High		74,600		76,500
Low		32,200		22,200

Greatest increase: Manasseh (20,500)

Greatest decrease: Simeon (37,100)

Significance of the Numbers in the Census:

1. If one understands the numbers to be literal and the men to represent about one-fourth of the population, then the number of the Israelites ranges from two to three million people.

A literal understanding of the numbers in the census is in congruence with Pharaoh's fear of the rapidly increasing Hebrews overrunning Egypt (Ex 1:7-12), the promises made to Abraham about becoming a great nation (Gen 12:2; 17:5-6), the earlier census taken during the first year in the wilderness (Exod 30:12 - 16; 38:26), and other traditions about the numbers of adult males who left Egypt (Ex 12:37; Num 11:21)

2. Some argue that the numbers cannot be literal for the following reasons:

- The Sinai wilderness did not have the ability to sustain such a large number of people and animals
- Israel was unable to subdue and displace the Canaanites
- Other non-literal approaches have been suggested for the reading of the numbers in the census:
- The census totals are misplaced census lists from the time of David
- The census totals are part of the writer's "epic prose" style intended to express the wholeness of Israel and the enormity of YHWH's deliverance of the people (e.g., figurative)
- The census totals are literary fiction and/or exaggerations corrupted by centuries of revising the Pentateuch
- The Hebrew word for "thousands" from the lack of vowel markings in the writings and could be read as "clan," "tribe," or even unit" (cf. Judg 6:15; Zech 9:7) or even "chieftain" or "armed warrior" (e.g., Gen 36:15).

The census lists of Numbers record either military 'units" or an unspecified number of warriors or individual (armed) fighting men. Such accounting lowers the Israelites army to a figure somewhere between 18,000 and 100,000 men, with the total Hebrew population numbering between 72,000 and 400,000 people. It is argued that these drastically reduces figures are more consistent with available historical and archaeological data regarding population patterns during the period of the Hebrew Exodus. this approach also corroborates the biblical affirmations about the size of Israel when compared with surrounding nations (cf. Dt 7:1-7; Exod 23:29)12

Structure of the Book:

The order (or disorder) of Numbers is often considered to be a difficulty for many in interpreting the book. Several suggestions for understanding the literary structure of this book are made by the scholars:

- The mixture of law and narrative is designed to remind the readers that they must do the will of God
- The inclusion of law with narrative is designed to emphasize promise in that Israel can fulfill it.
- The variation, form in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers emphasizes large cycles which bring out "the parallels between the three journeys, and between the three occasions of law-giving, at Sinai, Kadesh and the plains of Moab." The following charts emphasize this.

Outline of the Book of Numbers:

✓ Numbers 1:1-10:10 - Israel prepares for the journey to the Promised Land.

✓ Numbers 10:11-14:45 The people complain, Miriam and Aaron oppose Moses, and the people refuse to enter Canaan because of the reports of the unfaithful spies.

✓ Numbers 15:1-21:35 - For 40 years the people wander in the desert until the faithless generation is consumed

✓ Numbers 22:1-26:1 - As the people approach the Promised Land again, a king tries to hire Balaam, a local sorcerer and prophet, to put a curse on Israel. On the way, Balaam's donkey talks to him, saving him from death! An angel of the Lord tells Balaam to speak only what the Lord tells him. Balaam is able only to bless the Israelites, not curse them.

✓ Numbers 26:1-30:16 - Moses takes another census of the people, to organize an army. Moses commissions Joshua to succeed him. God gives instructions on offerings and feasts.

✓ Numbers 31:1-36:13 - The Israelites take vengeance on the Midianites, then camp on the plains of Moab

Goals of the Book:

- To fill-in the historical period from the Exodus and Sinai revelation to the preparations in Moab to enter the Promised Land
- To explain that the 38 year period in the wilderness was a consequence for the unbelief of the older generation (Dt 1:35ff)
- To demonstrate God's faithfulness and forbearance against the backdrop of Israel's unfaithfulness, rebellion, apostasy and frustration
- To present laws as case studies which do not have a precedent in what has been spoken thus far.
- To narrate the preparation of Israel for entry into the Promise Land by describing the journey from Sinai to the region beyond Jordan, and the legal decisions made in the wilderness

What does this book teach us about God?

This book teaches us some very important things about God.

1. God is with us always, if we are his people. He guides and protects us: God guided the Israelites by means of a cloud (Numbers 9:15-23). They carried the Ark with them wherever they went. The Ark showed them that God was with them always. He protected them from their enemies (Numbers 10:33-36).

2. God wants us to trust him: God had chosen Moses as the Israelites' leader. But they opposed Moses many times. They complained about the food in the desert (Numbers 11:4-6). They refused to enter the Promised Land. They believed that the people there were stronger than them. They did not trust God to help them (Numbers chapters 13 and 14). God loved them. But he had to discipline them (to teach or to control, sometimes by means of a punishment) (Numbers 14:26-35). God disciplines those people whom he loves (Hebrews 12:6).

3. There is only one real God. We must worship him only: God never allowed the Israelites to worship false gods (Num 25).

4. God always keeps his promises: God had promised to give to the Israelites their own land. He rescued them from the Egyptians. He guided them through the desert. They arrived at the Promised

Land. But they were afraid to enter it. However, God did not take back his promise. Instead, he gave the Promised Land to their children.

5. God is holy: God is different from people, whom he made. He is good completely. But all people are sinful. Sin is like dirt because it spoils our lives. Sin makes us dirty inside, in our hearts and minds. In other words, it ruins our thoughts, our attitudes and our behaviour. The Israelites washed themselves in special ways before they worshipped God. They made their bodies clean. They offered sacrifices. They believed that the blood from these sacrifices washed their sins away. So they felt clean inside their hearts. There were many special rules about how to worship God. All these rules showed that God is holy.

But we do not need to follow these special rules still. We do not need to kill animals as sacrifices. God has given us a new way to come to him. That way is by means of his son, that is, Jesus Christ. When people killed Jesus on a cross, he became the sacrifice for our sins. This sacrifice was for all people, for all time. Jesus' blood washes our sins away. When we believe in Jesus, God forgives our sins. Jesus suffered the punishment for our sins. Jesus is holy. When we believe in Jesus, God considers us holy, too. We can come to God at any time, in any place. God is our friend because of what Jesus did.

Chapter 9

The Book of Deuteronomy

The Book of Deuteronomy is the fifth and final Book of the Law of Moses, also known as the Torah or Pentateuch. The Book of Deuteronomy was known as *Hadabarim* in Hebrew Scripture, which means "the Words," namely, the words Moses spoke to the people in the fortieth year following the Exodus, on the other side of the Jordan River from the Promised Land. It is known as Deuteronomy (Second Law) because Moses recaps the Ten Commandments and the Laws governing the Covenant between God and the Israelites. There were also additional Laws in the Deuteronomic Covenant not present in the Sinai Covenant, such as the provision for warfare, to allow the conquest of Canaan; a provision for Kingship; and the Law given for one Sanctuary. The Book is organized into three discourses of Moses:

Historical Review and Exhortation (1:1 - 4:43)

God and His Covenant (4:44 - 11:32)

Exposition of the Law (12:1 - 26:19)

Prolonged Epilogue (27:1-34:12).

Moses emphasizes the Covenant with God and includes the second rendering of the Ten Commandments (5:6-21). Chapters 28 to 30 summarize for the Israelites the consequences of their behavior: he

calls for the Israelites to be faithful to the Covenant, and promises blessings for obedience, if they listen to the "voice of the Lord" (28:1 and 30:10). The Chapters express the conditional nature of the promise of the Land, as it emphasizes the correlation between faithfulness to the Covenant and settlement in the Land, and between infidelity and Exile. God offers mercy to his people Israel if they are repentant and turn again to the way of the Lord (30:1-10). The final portion of Deuteronomy (Chapters 31-34) relates the last acts of Moses, the commission of Joshua, the Song of Moses, and his death.

Moses offered excellent medical advice on Marine Life (14:9-10), which remains just as relevant today! The prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-19 was appreciated as a Messianic prophecy both by the Israelites (John 6:14) and by the Apostles and early Church (Acts 3:22-23 and 7:37).

The Book of Deuteronomy in a sense provides a bridge, for it serves both as a summary of the Providence of God towards his chosen people in the Pentateuch, and as a prologue to the theological History of the Israelites in the Promised Land as recorded in the Historical Books of the Old Testament. For example, Deuteronomy 12:17 points to one Sanctuary, "the place where he dwells," a place of centralized worship, accomplished with the building of Solomon's Temple (I Kings 5-8); Chapter 17 speaks of the role of a King should the people decide on one and the three provisions of a just king; and Chapters 28-30 prophetically warn of an Exile if the people forsake their Covenant with God.

The Book of Deuteronomy is often alluded to and quoted in the New Testament, as noted in the following three examples. When Jesus Christ named the first of the two greatest commandments (Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27), He referenced Deuteronomy 6:4-5 - "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. Therefore, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength." Jesus answered the devil in the first temptation (Luke 4:4) by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, "It is written, 'man does not live by bread alone.'" As noted above, Moses is quoted in Acts when he gave the definition and promise of a prophet in Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

Authorship

The term *Deuteronomy* (second law) is a term mistakenly derived from the Hebrew word *mishneh* in Dt 17:18. In that context, Moses simply commands the king to make a "copy of the law."[1] But Deuteronomy does something more than give a simple copy of the Law. The book offers a restatement of the Law for a new generation, rather than a mere copy of what had gone before. Deuteronomy records this "second law" - namely Moses's series of sermons in which he restated God's commands originally given to the Israelites some forty years earlier in Exodus and Leviticus.

"These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel," says Dt 1:1. Mosaic authorship of this book finds the usual support from Jewish tradition (with the entire Pentateuch) but also from within the biblical text. Several times, Deuteronomy asserts Moses as author (1:1; 4:44; 29:1). Speaking to Joshua, Moses's successor, the Lord referred to this "book of the law" as that which Moses commanded (Jos 1:8). And when future Old Testament and New Testament writers quoted from Deuteronomy, they often referred to it as originating with Moses (1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 14:6; Ezra 3:2; Neh 1:7; Mal 4:4; Mt 19:7; Lk 20:28).

Some obvious editorial changes were made to the text sometime after Moses recorded the bulk of it. For instance, he could not have written the final chapter, which dealt with his death. However, these and other small changes do not affect the generally accepted authorship of Moses. Since Moses died before Israel crossed the Jordan, the composition of the basic parts of Deuteronomy could not have taken place any later than 1406 B.C.

Context

The events which form the historical context for Deuteronomy take place on the Plains of Moab which is situated on the East Bank of the Jordan opposite the Canaanite city of Jericho. The Exodus generation had finally died off and Moses had led the new generation from wandering in the wilderness to the Plains of Moab. Encamped there, they were waiting for the word from Yahweh to cross the Jordan and enter the Land of Promise. But before that could take place certain other events must happen. The covenant, which had been broken by the Exodus generation, must first be renewed by the new generation. Thus Moses leads the sons of Israel through a covenant

renewal ceremony which is not fully realized until Israel crosses the Jordan and declares the covenant curses from atop Mount Ebal (chs. 27-30). Secondly, since God did not permit Moses to enter the Land of Promise with Israel, his death must take place (34:1-7) along with the orderly transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua (31:1-8,14-21; 34:9), Yahweh's appointed replacement for Moses. All of this takes place over the course of one month, after which all Israel mourns the death of Moses for 30 days (34:8).

The socio-cultural context in which the events of Deuteronomy are played out has not changed significantly from that of Numbers. In the former book, the Israelites were living a nomadic life for some 38 years while wandering about in the wilderness. Although the covenant-relationship between Yahweh and Israel had been disrupted as a result of Israel's refusal to obey Yahweh's command to enter the land promised to Abraham and take possession of it, the Mosaic Covenant had not been terminated. A fact that is well documents by Moses in Numbers. Israelite society, therefore, is yet bound by the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant. As significant and complex is the socio-cultural context established by this covenant, it has little affect on understanding the theological message developed by Moses in Deuteronomy.

The theological context for Deuteronomy looks back on the previous four books of the Pentateuch and subsumes all of their theological revelations as foundational to its framework. Most significant of this now extensive context is the covenant Yahweh has entered into with the nation as whole at Sinai, and which has been broken by the Exodus generation through their refusal to obey Yahweh and enter the Promised Land. Consequently, as the new generation is poised to enter and take possession of the land of Canaan, Israel's covenant-relationship with Yahweh is disrupted and must be restored through a renewal of the covenant. Yahweh's basis for not terminating the covenant and destroying Israel for their disobedience to the covenant stipulations is his unconditional covenant with Abraham. Yahweh's faithfulness to the conditional Mosaic Covenant is, as noted in Numbers, founded on the unconditional covenant He made with Abraham. This is significant because it demonstrates that God will fulfill all the promises He made with Abraham independent of Israel's faithfulness to Him. Thus the disruption of Israel's covenant-

relationship with Yahweh sets the theological stage for Deuteronomy in that Israel cannot enter into the Land and take possession of it without Yahweh's blessings which are conditioned on the nation walking in covenant-relationship with him. Thus a major addition to the theological context of Deuteronomy is the concept of covenant renewal.

Structure

The major divisions are made on the basis of the structuring of the speeches of Moses:

Introduction (1:1-5)
Moses' First Message (1:6-4:49)
Moses' Second Message (5-26)
Moses' Third Message (27-30)
Epilogue (31-34)

Deuteronomy as a Covenant

It becomes clear, however, from a comparison of suzerainty-vassal treaties of the second millennium B.C. with the form and content of Deuteronomy that the whole of this last book of the Pentateuch is in the covenant–treaty form of that age (see the Introduction to the Pentateuch for a discussion of this similarity). The procedure for the establishment and continuity of these treaties, as well as their literary structure, lends itself strikingly to the covenant which defines the relationship between Yahweh and His chosen people.

The main components of the Near Eastern treaties of this era include:

1. preamble;
2. historical prologue;
3. stipulations, laws, and regulations;
4. arrangements for depositing treaty copies;
5. arrangements for the regular reading of the treaty before the people;
6. witnesses to the covenant agreement;
7. curses for violating the covenant stipulations, and blessings for obedience to them;

Collectively, the Deuteronomic address of Moses follow this order, although in addition to the historical prologue, historical allusions are intermixed along with exhortations to Israel to give heed to Yahweh their God and to obey the covenant–treaty stipulations, which Moses not only states but also expounds on. This structure, which does not strictly follow the development of the Deuteronomy text, is summarized as:

1. preamble - Dt 1:1-5;
2. historical prologue - Dt 1:6-4:43;
3. stipulations, laws, and regulations - Dt 4:44-26:15;
4. arrangements for depositing treaty copies - Dt 31:24-26;
5. arrangements for regular reading of the treaty - Dt 30:9-12;
6. witnesses of the covenant agreement - Dt 4:26; 30:19; 31:28;
7. curses and blessings - Dt 28:1-68

Additionally, the Book of Deuteronomy calls for the renewal of the covenant, first entered into at Mount Sinai with the Exodus generation, as preparation for the new, or second, generation's entrance into Canaan - its conquest and occupation - and presents the way of life that the sons of Israel were to follow in the Land of Promise. Further, Deuteronomy makes provision for the transition of the covenant mediatorship through the commissioning of Joshua to replace Moses at his death.

Major Theological Emphases

The literary shape of Deuteronomy, as discussed below, makes evident the theological emphasis of the Book of Deuteronomy. The Mosaic covenant, which Israel entered into with Yahweh at Mount Sinai, is reiterated, expounded on, and expanded by Moses as he leads the new generation in renewing the covenant prior to their entering the Land of Promise to possess it. The continual rebelling of the Exodus generation, culminating in their defiant refusal to obey Yahweh and enter the land of Canaan and take possession of it, led to their breaking of the covenant. Hence the necessity for renewing the covenant by the new generation is made obvious.

What is significant in Deuteronomy, and different from the presentation of the covenant stipulations recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, is Moses' expounding of the Law and expansion of it,

and his inclusion of promises of blessing for obedience to the Law and threats of curses for disobedience to the Law. Because of Israel's passed history of continual rebellion against Yahweh, and the severity of the curses promised for disobedience, Moses, again and again, exhorts the new generation to obey the covenant stipulations.

Significantly, the curses enumerated far outweigh the blessings. Further, there is a progression in the degree of severity of the curses, with the worst of all possible curses culminating in the violent expulsion of Israel out of the Land of their inheritance and into exile where they will once again serve their enemies under the yoke of oppression (28:15-68). In view in this worst case scenario are the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities (28:36), as well as a horrific description of the devastation that will result from the invading army God will send against His people in response to their disobedience (28:45-68).

Yet Yahweh is ever faithful to His elect people whom He promised Abraham He would bless. Thus along with the threat of destruction of the nation due to disobedience to the Law of the Covenant, a promise is given for restoration in response to repentance. Even in the worst case with Israel expelled from the land and scattered among the nations in exile, if the remnant of Israel will return to Yahweh and obey Him with all their heart and with all their soul according to all that is written in the Law, then Yahweh will gather His people from the lands that He scattered them and have compassion on them and restore them to the Land of Promise and bless them abundantly (30:1-10).

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