

Introduction To The Old Testament Scriptures: *Exodus to Esther*

**Middler Old Testament Isagogics
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Preface

These notes serve as an introduction to the historical books of the Old Testament from Exodus through Esther. These books cover Old Testament history from Israel in Egypt through the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile up to the time of Ezra, Esther, and Nehemiah. The portion of the earlier edition of the notes which covered Genesis 25-50 has been incorporated into the notes for the Genesis course.

These notes build on the isagogics notes which have been in use at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for many years. The original outline was prepared by Professor August Pieper, and previous editions of the notes which were published in 1979 and 1985 were largely the work of Professor E. H. Wendland.

Biblical references are from the *New International Version* unless otherwise noted. Maps, illustrations, and charts are from various sources. Since these notes are accompanied by an extensive set of PowerPoints, most of the maps and pictures have been placed into the PowerPoints rather than into the notes.

These notes are intended to provide a brief running outline to assist in the reading and review of the biblical text. For more detailed notes on historical and archaeological issues and application of the text see the *Concordia/NIV Study Bible* and *The People's Bible*.

We have retained the study questions and homiletical suggestions from previous editions of these notes, even though they are not extensively used in the isagogics course as it is presently taught. Some students who use these notes may want to have these resources available for additional study. Rtf and Pdf versions of the notes will be posted on the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary web site.

To use the MS Word electronic versions of these files you must install the Graeca and Hebraica fonts. These fonts are stored in the fonts folder on the common drive at WLS and at the location where the notes are posted on the WLS web site.

This edition of the notes was prepared by Professors John Brug and James Westendorf. Formatting was done by students Noah Headrick and Nathaniel Biebert.

John F. Brug
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CHAPTER ONE

THE STUDY OF BIBLICAL INTRODUCTION

ISAGOGICS

Theology consists of the thorough study of Scripture (exegetical theology) and the proclamation of Scripture (practical theology).

Isagogics as a theological discipline is the initial stage of exegetical theology. The word isagogics is derived from the Greek *εἰσάγειν*, which means “lead in,” or “introduce.” Isagogics is thus the technical name applied to the study of biblical introduction. In its larger scope the term “isagogics” includes many areas of study relating to background information that provides help in gaining a better understanding of the biblical text: issues of authorship, genre, languages, culture, archaeology, geography, history, chronology, and textual transmission. All of these elements are treated in this course, but for us at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary the primary focus of any course of scriptural study is to be on the content of the biblical text. Therefore, this course goes beyond the scope of traditional isagogics into the area of biblical survey. A careful reading and study of the biblical text itself is the most crucial part of this course.

While isagogics involves an introduction to the text and biblical survey scans the text for content, exegesis (Greek *ἐξέγεισθαι*: show the way) is a thorough interpretation of the biblical text on the basis of the original Hebrew and Greek texts. At Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary the Old Testament exegetical courses are Genesis 1-25, selected Psalms, and Isaiah 40-66. Spot exegesis of key passages of the Old Testament is included in this isagogics course and in the dogmatics courses.

TWO DEPARTMENTS OF ISAGOGICS

- A. **General introduction** deals with the canon (which books of the Bible are recognized by the Christian church as inspired, and therefore serve as the authoritative rule of religious faith and practice), as well as with the resources and the principles of textual criticism (how do we establish the original reading of the text from the extant variants?).
- B. **Special introduction** leads into the individual books of the Bible, giving the basic message of each book, its general content, its authorship, its time and purpose of writing, and major difficulties.

This course is the latter of the two, a course in special introduction, with the greatest stress upon content of the biblical text rather than on critical theory about the text, as is often the case in contemporary courses in isagogics. Attention is given to an evaluation of the historical-critical method of Bible interpretation but only after a consideration of the claims that the biblical text makes for itself.

The subjects of the Old Testament canon and Old Testament textual criticism are given a fuller treatment in the Senior isagogics course, which focuses on the poetic and prophetic books.

Our stress upon biblical content is unique in these days of critical analysis and theory, which results from the fact that most biblical scholars no longer accept the doctrine of the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. Most contemporary scholars have much to say about the Bible rather than letting the Bible speak for itself.

Our goal is to let the Scriptures speak to us. It is not so much that we interpret the Scriptures, but that the Scriptures interpret us — showing us where we came from, who we are, where we are going, and how we

will get there.

For us the Old Testament is the story of God's love. We see how he created the world and us with it, how through Adam and Eve we fell into sin, how he gave the gospel to Adam and Eve and to all their descendants, and how he kept this promise alive for thousands of years until Christ the Savior was at last born in Bethlehem. The whole Old Testament is simply an exposition of Genesis 3:15:

I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers.
He will crush your head,
And you will strike his heel.

For centuries the battle raged between the descendents of Adam and Eve who served the Lord and those who served Satan. In spite of human treachery and unfaithfulness, even on the part of God's own people, the promise was kept alive until the Offspring of the woman came to crush the Serpent's head.

OUR APPROACH

1. The purpose of our study of Scripture is to save sinners. To us God's Word is the storehouse of his grace (John 5:39), a message to be proclaimed to all people.
2. For us the thirty-nine canonical books of the Old Testament provide the subject matter for our study.
3. Our approach is governed by the fact that we are Christians. The Spirit of God testifies that we are God's children by faith in Christ Jesus, and that God's Word is truth. We accept every statement of Scripture as God's inerrant Word.
4. This approach distinguishes us from many modern students of Scripture, who accuse us of being "prejudiced" and "unscientific." In fact, however, there is no such thing as an unbiased approach to Scripture. Everyone is by nature hostile to God's revealed truth. Human reason regards it as foolishness and a stumbling block. Our hearts are persuaded by the Holy Spirit that Scripture is divine truth. We are "biased," since God himself has impressed this "prejudice" upon us. We are dominated by faith (cf. 1 Corinthians, Chapters 1 and 2).
5. This approach does not deprive our study of its careful "scientific" character. On the contrary, our concern for a correct understanding of the original languages, their grammatical usage, their structure, the intended sense of the writer, his background, the textual correctness of the manuscripts, etc., is more intense than that of the critic, whose interest in the text is primarily academic. We do, however, reject the negative criticism of modern scholars, which is based on anti-supernaturalistic presuppositions against the miraculous intervention of God into the affairs of men and the reality of prophecy and on an a priori rejection of biblical inerrancy.
6. Our approach is always governed by the practical thought: "How does this passage of Scripture give me a better insight into God's saving purposes? ... How can I make use of this in declaring that purpose to others?" We study to assure ourselves and to convey this assurance to others! Our isagogical study, therefore, will also call attention to homiletical and pastoral values in the books treated in this course.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ISAGOGICS

1. The Old Testament church recognized the inspired books as canonical and used them as Scripture

from the time when they were given.

2. The post-apostolic church received the Old Testament upon the authority of Christ (Jn 10:35; Mt 5:18; Lk 24:44) and the apostles (2 Tm 3:15; 2 Pe 1:21; He 1:1-2).
3. The early Church Fathers (Clement of Rome, ca. 101; Ignatius, ca. 112; Polycarp, ca. 150) were not concerned with questions of scientific criticism as such, being primarily occupied with the exposition of the contents of Scripture and the formulation of doctrine. Apologists such as Justin Martyr responded to the attacks on Scripture by unbelieving critics like Celsus.
4. The church of the second and third centuries concerned itself with questions relating to canonicity (division between homologoumena and antilegomena). The canon received external recognition in 393 at Hippo and in 397 at Carthage, but the books had been recognized as canonical from the beginning.
5. Commentaries on Old Testament books were written throughout the patristic and medieval periods, but tradition began to replace Scripture as a basis for teaching.
6. The Christian Renaissance together with Humanism (Erasmus) brought about a revival of interest in advanced scholarship based on the biblical languages. Nicholas of Lyra (1340) and his learned forerunner Roger Bacon (1294) are worthy of mention as students who concerned themselves more extensively with the content, languages, and authority of Scriptures.
7. True and thorough scriptural study, however, is a product of the Reformation, which asserted the authority of Scripture against the traditional authority of the papal church. However, it was two Roman Catholics, (Pagninus, 1536; Sixtus of Sienna, 1599) who were the first to write strictly isagogical works. Although Luther's works contained much isagogical material, he did not write a separate isagogical treatise.
8. Michael Walther (1662) with his *Officina Biblica* and Abraham Calov with his *Criticus Sacer Biblicus* were the first Lutheran theologians to write biblical introductions in the modern sense. They were followed by the Reformed authors August Pfeiffer (1680) and Johann Heidegger (1681).
9. Modern negative criticism had its beginnings with the English deist Thomas Hobbes (1651), the Jewish agnostic Benedict Spinoza (1670), and the Catholic philosopher Richard Simon (1680). Simon was attacked by the Arminian Joh. Clericus (1736) and particularly by the Lutheran Johann Gottlob Carpzov (1725), whose *Introduction into the Canonical Books of the Old Testament* is regarded as a classic in the development of isagogics.
10. The era of Rationalism in the 18th Century produced isagogical studies which were dominated by skepticism (J.D. Michaelis, 1791; J.S. Semmler, 1791; J.G. Eichhorn, 1827; G.L. Bauer, 1806; J.S. Vater).
11. These men were forerunners of the 19th Century negative critics, who were also greatly influenced by the "Enlightenment" philosophy of Immanuel Kant. The Old Testament introductions of this period treated the Bible like any other human book. Names such as Wilhelm Martin Leberecht DeWette (1849), Heinrich Ewald (1875) and F.C. Brunner (1860) are characteristic of the skeptical approach of this era. Their efforts were opposed by more conservative theologians such as E.W. Hengstenberg (1867), H.Ch. Haevernick (1845), C.F. Keil (1888), Franz Delitzsch (1890). With Karl H. Graf and William Vatke a so-called modern school of thought came into prominence, popularized by Julius Wellhausen (1878) and Abraham Kuenen, often referred to as the "Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen

School.” This school of thought denied every kind of miracle and supernatural revelation and posited an evolutionary development in the religious life of Israel without any kind of divine intervention. It obviously was influenced by the philosophical position of Hegel. Samuel Driver (1891), Samuel Davidson, Edward Riehm (1889), and F.E. Koenig (1891) served in a mediating position against Wellhausianism, and positive opponents were Adolph and Theodore Zahn, William Henry Green (Princeton), and Edward Rupprecht.

12. 20th Century exponents of negative criticism with its newer twists and theories, include Herman Gunkel (“Source-criticism,” *Sitz im Leben*), Otto Eissfeldt (*Gattungen*), W. Oesterley, T.H. Robinson, H.H. Rowley and R.H. Pfeiffer. Conservative critics of the critics include Edward J. Young (*An Introduction to the Old Testament*), Gleason L. Archer, Jr. (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*), and Merrill Unger (*An Introductory Guide to the OT*).
13. The recent trend in negative criticism has been disintegration into competing schools, which are united only in their rejection of inspiration and inerrancy.

The subject of negative criticism will be taken up in greater detail as we consider the historical-critical approach to the Pentateuch, which follows our study of Deuteronomy.

CHAPTER ONE – QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Where does isagogics fit into the overall scope of theological study?
2. Explain the difference between isagogics and exegesis.
3. Why is our approach to the study of isagogics almost unique among present-day biblical scholars and seminaries?
4. How would you answer those who accuse us of being “unscientific” or “uncritical” in our study of Scripture?

FOR ADDED DISCUSSION

1. The Old Lutheran dogmatists declared axiomatically: “*Theologia est habitus practicus*.” What did they mean by this statement?
2. How can a theologian make use of isagogics in his practical work of preaching, teaching, and counseling?
3. Discuss the basic differences between the “historical-grammatical” and the “historical-critical” approaches to the study of Scripture.
4. In what way do some Bible students try to take a mediating position between these two basic approaches?

FOR ADDED READING

Read the introduction of one of the Old Testament introductions recommended below.

OT ISAGOGICS BIBLIOGRAPHY

Old Testament Introductions

The Word Becoming Flesh, Horace D. Hummel. Concordia, 1979. Lutheran.

A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, G.L. Archer Jr. Moody, 1949, New edition, Moody, 1994. A best buy.

Introduction to the Old Testament, R.K. Harrison. Eerdmans, 1969. Very comprehensive, dated.

Introduction to the Old Testament, E.J. Young. Eerdmans, 1949. Conservative, dated.

A Survey of the Old Testament, Andrew Hill & John Walton. Zondervan, 1991. Brief, relatively up-to-date.

An Introduction to the Old Testament, Raymond Dillard and Tremper Longman III. Zondervan, 1994. Moderate Evangelical.

Can the Bible Be Trusted?, Uuras Saarnivaara. Osterhus, 1983. Opposes critical views.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. I, F. Gaebelin. Zondervan, 1976-1992. Evangelical.

Introductory Guide to the Old Testament, Merrill F. Unger. Zondervan, 1951.

Kingdom of Priests, Eugene Merrill. Baker, 1987. On the history of the divided kingdom.

Introduction to the Historical Books of the Old Testament, David Howard Jr. Moody 1993. Evangelical.

Book of Books, John Schaller, Northwestern Publishing House, 1924 original, 2002 reprint. Quite basic.

Commentaries

A regularly up-dated list of recommended Old Testament commentaries is maintained by John Brug in the essay file of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library. Here we will simply list a few of the most important series.

The People's Bible, Northwestern Publishing House's complete commentary for lay people.

**Concordia Study Bible*, serves as the best one-volume Bible commentary.

The Concordia Commentary, an in-progress Lutheran commentary. Very detailed and consistently good so far.

Commentary on the Old Testament (10 Vol.), Keil-Delitzsch. Lutheran, but dated, hard to read. Free online.

Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Evangelical, but brief.

New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT), Evangelical, mildly critical.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Evangelical, brief, mildly millennial.

New American Commentary, conservative Baptist.

Bible History of the Old Testament (4 Vol.), A. Edersheim, a Lutheran classic.

Bible History Commentary, Werner H. Franzmann, Lutheran, primarily for teachers.

For recommendations on individual books consult the online list.

Archaeology

The Old Testament and the Archeologist, H.D. Lance. Fortress, 1981. Best simple overview of the problem of methodology and relating to the Bible.

Doing Archaeology in the Land of the Bible: a Basic Guide, John D. Currid. Baker, 1999. Quite elementary.

Biblical Archaeology, John Sailhamer. Zondervan, 1998. Very brief, no pictures. Evangelical.

Archaeology and the Old Testament, Alfred J. Hoerth. Baker, 1998. Summary of finds. Evangelical.

Benchmarks in Time and Culture, G.L. Mattingly et al. (eds.). Scholars Press, 1988. On method.

The Future of Biblical Archaeology, James Hoffmeier and Alan Millard, Eerdmans, 2004. Evangelical.

Archaeology and Bible History, Joseph P. Free, revised and expanded by Howard F. Vos. Zondervan, 1992. Results by era. Evangelical.

Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000-586 B.C.E., Amihai Mazar. Doubleday, 1990. More heavy duty. Somewhat critical.

The Archaeology of Ancient Israel, Amnon Ben-Tor, editor. Yale University Press, 1992. Somewhat critical.

The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East, American Schools of Oriental Research, Eric M. Meyers, editor. 1997. Critical

The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land. Ephraim Stern, editor; Israel Exploration Society, V.1-4, 1993. V. 5, 2008. Best summary of sites.

The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology, Blaiklock & Harrison, eds. Regency, 1983.

Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vol.). Relatively up-to-date and comprehensive, but critical. Doubleday, 1992.

Civilizations of the Ancient Near East (4 vol.), J. Sasson. Scribner, 1995. Much background material.

The Archaeology of the Land of Israel, Y. Aharoni. Westminster Press, 1982. Critical.

Peoples of the Old Testament World, Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly & Edwin M. Yamauchi,

editors. Baker Books, 1994. Summaries on specific peoples.

The World of the Old Testament, A.S. van der Woude. Eerdmans, 1989. Evangelical.

Cities Of The Biblical World: Jericho, J. Barteltt. Eerdmans, 1982. Evangelical.

The Archeology of Jerusalem, Harold Mare. Baker, 1987. Evangelical.

Jerusalem: An Archaeological Biography, Hershel Shanks. Biblical Archaeological Society, 1995.

Texts

Ancient Near Eastern Texts (ANET), 3rd Edition, J.B. Pritchard, Princeton, 1969. Comprehensive collection of texts.

Documents From Old Testament Times, D. Winton Thomas. Harper Torchbooks, 1958. Brief collection.

The Context of Scripture, v. 1. *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*; v. 2. *Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*; v. 3. *Archival Documents from the Biblical World*. William Hallo, Brill, 1996-. Replaces ANET as the standard collection.

Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context, John Walton. Regency, 1989.

Guide Books

The Holy Land: An Archeological Guide, Jerome Murphy-O'Conner. Oxford, 1980/ 1998

Geography

The Geography of the Bible, Denis Baly. Harper Row, 1974. Basic Biblical Geography is a short version.

The Land of Milk and Honey, John A. Beck. Concordia, 2006. Basic coverage.

The MacMillan Bible Atlas, Aharoni, Y. MacMillan, 1968. Most detailed historical maps. Critical.

Moody Bible Atlas, B. Beitzel. Moody Press, 1985. Best all-round atlas.

Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible, Carl Rasmussen. Zondervan, 1989. A good choice.

Student Map Manual. Most detailed geographic maps. Zondervan, 1979.

The Holy Land Satellite Atlas: Student Map Manual Illustrated Supplement, Volume 1, Richard Cleave, Nicosia, Cyprus: Rohr, 1994,

The Land of the Bible, Y. Aharoni and A. Rainey. Westminster, 1979. Historical geography.

The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World, Anson Rainey, Carta, 2006. A major updating of this historical geography. Critical.

Chronology

Chronological Charts of the OT, John H. Walton, Zondervan, 1979.

Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings, E.R. Thiele. Eerdmans, 1951.

Handbook of Biblical Chronology, Jack Finegan. Hendrickson, 1998.

Old Testament Interpretation

Relatively conservative

On the Reliability of the Old Testament, K. A. Kitchen, Eerdmans, 2003. Rousing defense of the historicity of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament, Its Claims and Its Critics, Oswald Allis. Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972.

From Paradise to the Promised Land, T.D. Alexander. Baker Books, 1998.

Form Criticism Reexamined, W.A. Maier. Concordia, 1973.

The End of the Historical Critical Method, Gerhard Maier. Concordia, 1977

The Documentary Hypothesis, U. Cassuto. Hebrew University, c1961. Jewish defense of Pentateuch.

How Dependable Is the Bible?, R.F. Surburg. Lippincott, 1972. Lutheran.

A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament, Robert Dick Wilson. The Sunday School Times Co., c 1926. A classic defense.

The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch, Wm. Henry Green. Baker Book House, 1978 reprint of 1895.

Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation, W.C. Kaiser, Jr., ed. Baker, 1972.

New Perspectives on the Old Testament, J.B. Payne, ed., Word Books, 1970.

Moderate to liberal

Israelite & Judean History, J.H. Hayes & J.M. Miller. Westminster, 1977. Good overview of the liberal critical approach.

The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters, D.A. Knight & G.M. Tucker (editors). Fortress, 1985. Useful overview of the liberal approach.

Early Israel in Recent History Writing, J. Bright. A.R.Allenson, 1956.

Essays on Old Testament History and Religion, A. Alt. Doubleday, 1967.

The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays, G. von Rad. Oliver & Boyd, 1966.

The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form Critical Method, K. Koch. Scribner, 1969.

The Legends of Genesis, the Biblical Saga and History, H. Gunkel. Schocken Books, 1964 reprint.

The History of Israel, M. Noth. A. & C. Black, 1958.

The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Essays, M. Noth. Oliver & Boyd, 1966.

The Old Testament In Modern Research, H.F. Hahn. Fortress, 1966.

The Old Testament: An Introduction, Rolf Rendtorff. Fortress, 1986. Recent trends.

Canon

The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church, Roger Beckwith, Eerdmans, 1985.

The Oracles of God, Andrew Steinmann, Concordia, 1999.

Examination of the Council of Trent I, Martin Chemnitz, Concordia, 1971, p 168-195

Old Testament Textual Criticism

Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Emanuel Tov. Fortress, 1992, 2nd edition 2002. The most highly regarded textbook on the subject. Critical.

Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction, Ellis R. Brotzman. Baker, 1994. A good, simple textbook, less comprehensive than Tov.

The Text of the Old Testament, Ernst Würthwein, B. Blackwell, Oxford 1957, Eerdmans, 1995. Useful on manuscripts and versions and for plates.

Understanding BHS, A Manual For Users, Reinhard Wonneberger, Biblical Institute Press, Rome, 1984.

A Simplified Guide To BHS, William Scott, Bibal Press, 1987.

Bibliographies and Aids

“Commentaries for the Pastor’s Study: Old Testament,” *WLQ*, Summer 2001, p 196-209. Maintained on the WLS web site.

Old Testament Commentary Survey, 4th Edition, Tremper Longman III. Baker, 2007. 2nd edition, 1995.

Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study, F.W. Danker. Fortress, 1993.

CHAPTER TWO THE PENTATEUCH (תּוֹרָה)

THE TRIRIPARTITE DIVISION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Hebrew Bible is divided into three parts:

1. The Torah (תּוֹרָה ; Pentateuch)
2. The Prophets –
 - a. Former Prophets (נְבִיאִים רִאשׁוֹנִים): Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings
 - b. Latter Prophets (נְבִיאִים אַחֲרוֹנִים): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, 12 minor prophets.
3. The Writings – (כְּתוּבִים) also called *Hagiographa*
 - a. Poetry and Wisdom: Psalms, Job, Proverbs,
 - b. Rolls or Scrolls (מְגִלּוֹת): Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther
 - c. Historical: Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 and 2 Chronicles.

Note: Various codexes of the Old Testament have the books of the *Kethubim* in various orders.

Note: A common Jewish name for the Hebrew Bible, *Tanakh*, is an acronym based on the initials of the three divisions: Torah, Neviim, Kethubim.

The Septuagint also has a tripartite division of the Old Testament books, but arranges them in a somewhat different order. Its divisions are those we are familiar with from our English Bibles: Pentateuch, historical, and poetical. The order of books closely resembles our English versions.

The Torah (Pentateuch)

The five books or the five-fold book of Moses is commonly called the Torah, commonly translated as Law, though this is somewhat misleading.

The name תּוֹרָה is derived from the Hebrew verb יָרָה, “shoot, give direction.” The Hiphil-based noun form תּוֹרָה denotes “instruction.”

- a. The word תּוֹרָה means “instruction, doctrine, law, or God’s word” (Jos 1:7; Ne 8:2; in the NT: Lk 10:26; Jn 1:45). It can refer to the Pentateuch or to God’s Word as a whole.
- b. A more complete name for the Pentateuch is “book of the law” (Dt 28:61), and its author is both divine (“book of the law of God” - 2 Chr 17:9; Jos 24:26; Ne 8:8) and human (“book of Moses” – 2 Chr 35:12; Ezr 6:18; Ne 8:1 or “law of Moses” – 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Chr 23:18; Ezr 3:2).
- c. Similarly the NT refers to the “law of Moses” (Lk 24:44), or “book of Moses” (Mk 12:26).

The above references clearly show that the designation “Torah” refers to the entire Pentateuch, and not merely to a “code of laws” as the term is often understood (see also Acts 15:21 and Ga 4:21). They also point to the divine character of the Torah, as well as to its human authorship under God’s direction. (Torah or Law may also refer to the whole Old Testament, see Jn 10:34-35.)

The name Pentateuch is derived from two Greek words: πέντε, meaning “five,” and τεῦχος which roughly means “case,” a reference to the cases or pigeon-holes containing the five scrolls of the Torah. The word Pentateuch is an adjective understanding the noun βιβλος following it. The word could be translated “five-volumed.”

The division of the Torah into five books is very ancient. The five books were at first named by their opening words:

- Genesis -- בְּרֵאשִׁית *Bereshit:* In the beginning
- Exodus -- שְׁמוֹת (וַאֲלֵה) *Shemot:* Names
- Leviticus -- וַיִּקְרָא *Vayyiqra:* And he called
- Numbers -- וַיִּדְבֵר *Vayyidabar:* And he said (Also called בְּמִדְבָּר : [third word] In the wilderness)
- Deuteronomy -- הַדְּבָרִים (וַאֲלֵה) *Hadevarim:* The Words or Sayings

The idea of a Hexateuch (adding Joshua to form six books), as advocated first by Bleek and Ewald and as accepted by many later Old Testament critics, has no basis in fact and reveals a gross misunderstanding of history as the Torah presents it.

AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH

The author of the Pentateuch is Moses. This does not mean that Moses wrote it all with his own hand, nor that he arrived at all his material exclusively by direct revelation. The portions referring to his death may very well have been added to his writings by other men of God.

Moses quite possibly made use of available written records from the patriarchs or Joseph, or even from earlier times. He may have drawn on the services of scribes as other writers of biblical books did.

Nevertheless, Moses is rightly called the true author of the Pentateuch in the full sense of the word, even as is stated by our Lord Jesus Christ. We base this conclusion upon evidence found in the Bible itself:

1. In the first place, the Pentateuch itself testifies to Mosaic authorship (Ex 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Nu 33:1-2; Dt 31:9).
2. Moreover, other Old Testament books refer to his authorship (Jos 1:7; 8:31-32; 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 14:6; 21:8; Ezr 3:2; 6:18; 7:6; Ne 13:1; Dn 9:11-13; Mal 4:4).
3. The NT witness is the same (Mt 19:8; Mk 12:26; Lk 24:44; Jn 5:46-47; 7:19; Ac 3:22).
4. There is other internal evidence of Mosaic authorship:
 - a. Eyewitness details in the account of the Exodus (Ex 15:27; Nu 11:7-8).
 - b. A thorough acquaintance with Egypt (Egyptian names, gods, expressions, customs) (cf. Archer, p. 118-121).
 - c. Archaisms in language characteristic of an early period of writing.
 - d. The unity of arrangement according to a magnificent plan, which underlies the entire Pentateuch and which is evidence for single authorship (see “Content of the Pentateuch”).

According to our isagogical method we shall proceed first to review the content of the entire Pentateuch together with a study of each book before giving consideration to the negative criticism of the Pentateuch. Such a procedure accentuates the positive, which is so sadly lacking in most biblical study today. It also gives us a better idea of what is actually being attacked before the attack itself is made.

CONTENT OF THE PENTATEUCH

The Pentateuch is intended to be neither a history of the ancient world, nor simply a national history of Israel. It is rather a history of salvation, tracing this history from the beginning of this earth and presenting the founding of the theocratic community of the chosen people of God. It is thus a history of the kingdom of God. By “kingdom of God” we understand *God’s activity in his plan of salvation, or God’s rule in the interests of his church.*

“The entire five-part work in plan and execution forms one complete and carefully constructed whole, commencing with the creation and reaching to the death of Moses, the mediator of the Old Covenant. The world which God created is the scene of a history which embraces both God and man, the site for the kingdom of God in its earthly and temporal form. All that the first book (*Genesis*) contains with reference to the early human race, from Adam to the patriarchs of Israel, stands in a more or less immediate relation to the kingdom of God in Israel, of which the other books describe the actual establishment. The second book (*Exodus*) depicts the inauguration of this kingdom at Sinai. The third book (*Leviticus*) describes the ritual of the kingdom of God, and the fourth book (*Numbers*) its political organization by facts and legal precepts. The fifth book (*Deuteronomy*) recapitulates in a hortatory strain, embracing both history and legislation, and impresses it upon the hearts of the people, for the purpose of arousing true fidelity to the covenant, and securing its lasting duration. The economy of the Old Covenant having thus been established, the revelation of the law closes with the death of its mediator” (adapted from Keil-Delitzsch *Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 16).

In the next paragraph this commentary adds: “This five-fold division was not made by some later editor,

but is founded in the entire plan of the law, and is therefore to be regarded as original.” The more we learn to appreciate the construction of the Pentateuch as God’s carefully planned revelation for the salvation of mankind, the less appealing the theories of the historical critics will become.

God intended the Pentateuch to be “salvation history,” not a world or a national history. The first eleven chapters of Genesis cover epochal events only in the broadest outlines. This is followed by details concerning the patriarchs which have little relevance for a national or world history, but which are important for the unfolding of God’s plan of salvation. Exodus 1 skips over 400 years. Virtually nothing is said about the 38 years of wandering in the wilderness. This is God’s way of telling history, salvation history, proclaiming the establishment of his Kingdom!

The theme of the Pentateuch is found in Exodus 19:6: “You will be for me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation” (cf. 1 Pe 2:9f).

CHAPTER TWO (THE PENTATEUCH) – QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What is the basic meaning of the word “Torah”? What do the Scriptures mean when they refer to the “law” or the “law of God”?
2. What do the Scriptures mean when they refer to the “book of Moses” or the “law of Moses”? Cite a passage from both Old and New Testaments in support of this.
3. Cite a passage which testifies to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch
 - a. from the Pentateuch itself;
 - b. from another Old Testament book;
 - c. from the witness of Christ;
 - d. from the testimony of an apostle.
4. What internal evidence also bears witness to Mosaic authorship?
5. Why do we make such a point of stressing Mosaic authorship when it seems so self-evident from the Bible itself?
6. Explain what we mean when we say: “The Pentateuch gives us the early historical development of the Kingdom of God.”
7. Show how each of the books of the Pentateuch relates to the development of this history.
8. Give the theme of the Pentateuch as stated in one of its own passages.

FOR ADDED DISCUSSION

1. Give the etymological background of the following words, and show how this helps us understand their meaning:
 - a. Pentateuch
 - b. Torah
2. We say that the Pentateuch relates the early “history of the kingdom of God.” Show how the following passages shed light on what the Bible means when it refers to the “kingdom of God”: Mk 1:14-15, Lk 17:20-21, Jn 18:36-37. Also: the Second Petition of the Lord’s Prayer

3. Relate Exodus 19:6 (the theme of the Pentateuch) to 1 Peter 2:9.

What purpose was Israel to serve as a nation of kings and priests in Old Testament times?

How does this apply also to us as New Testament Christians according to 1 Pe 2:9?

FOR ADDED READING

Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 117-126.

John Schaller, *Das Reich Gottes, WLQ*, Vol. 15, p. 81-110 and 153-174.

CHAPTER THREE

GENESIS (בְּרֵאשִׁית)

Genesis presents, in two unequal parts:

The Primordial History of the Kingdom of God

- I. In the original world through the Flood (Ch 1-11).
- II. In the story of the patriarchs of Israel (Ch 12-50).

Theme from Lawrenz and Jeske, *A Commentary on Genesis 1-11* (COG): The Beginning History of God's Saving History. The two themes sound different, but say the same thing. God's Kingdom is not a place as much as it is an activity, God the King's saving activity. See "Content of the Pentateuch" in the previous chapter.)

"Primordial" means "first in time," "existing from the beginning." Genesis is truly a book of origins, presenting the origin of the universe as well as the origin of sin and grace. It "narrates the history of the human race as the history of God's plan of salvation for sinful mankind" (Keil-Delitzsch *Commentary*).

So far as the plan of Genesis is concerned, the contents are divided into ten groups, called *toledoth* (תּוֹלְדוֹת). The RSV translates the word *toledoth* as "generation." That translation is literal, but misses the sense of the word as used here. The NIV translation "account" gives better meaning. It is also clear that these ten *toledoth* are headings of the sections following them, rather than subscriptions. As Leupold points out in his commentary (p. 110), the word is frequently used in Scripture as the heading of a report which is to follow. It does not tell how things came into being; rather what happened after such persons or things had appeared on the scene. Thus each Toledoth is an account of a certain development which took place while God was active in behalf of the salvation of mankind. The word could well be translated "subsequent history."

These are the 10 Toledoth:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Heaven and earth - 2:4 to 4:26 | 6. Terah - 11:27 to 25:11 |
| 2. Adam - 5:1 to 6:8 | 7. Ishmael - 25:12-18 |
| 3. Noah - 6:9 to 9:29 | 8. Isaac - 25:19 to 35:29 |
| 4. Sons of Noah - 10:1 to 11:9 | 9. Esau - 36:1-43 |
| 5. Shem - 11:10-26 | 10. Jacob - 37:2 to 50:26 |

The first five Toledoth anticipate the selection of one nation to be the recipient of divine revelation. The second five Toledoth present the leading families of the patriarchal era. The families which branch off of the main line are first dispensed with; then the main line is described in more detail. Thus Cain precedes Seth; Japheth and Ham precede Shem; Ishmael comes before Isaac and Esau before Jacob. "In this regularity of composition, according to a settled plan, the book of Genesis may clearly be seen to be the careful production of one single author, who looked at the historical development of the human race in the light of divine revelation, and thus exhibited it as a complete and well arranged introduction to the history of the Old Testament kingdom of God" (Keil-Delitzsch *Commentary*, p. 37).

"Such systematic treatment hardly accords with a theory of heterogeneous and awkwardly combined sources posited by the Wellhausen theory" (Archer - *Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 195).

At Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Genesis 1:1 to 25:11 is studied in the Junior year as an exegetical course based on the Hebrew text. This section includes the first six *toledoth*. The isagogical study of the final four toledoth beginning at Genesis 25:12 is also part of the Junior course. A summary of the ten Toledoth is presented here for purposes of a brief review.

EACH TOLEDOTH IS AN ACCOUNT OF A DEVELOPMENT WHICH TOOK PLACE WHILE GOD WAS ACTIVE IN BEHALF OF THE SALVATION OF MANKIND!

1. HEAVEN AND EARTH (2:4) - Here we are told of the extraordinary development which heaven and earth experienced when man, the very crown of God's creation, was drawn into sin. Thereby man not only brought death and damnation upon himself, but gave occasion also for the entire animate and inanimate creature-world to be placed under the bondage of corruption. God, however, in his free and faithful grace, responded to this dire development with his kingdom-activity in behalf of man's salvation. This toledoth starts out with valuable background information for this cataclysmic development. We are given a detailed picture of the Creator's intimate relation to man. It lets us see how God revealed himself as the LORD who lavished his love upon his foremost creature in every way. He formed man carefully, gave him a wonderful home to meet all his needs. In the Tree of Knowledge God provided man with a simple yet effective opportunity to express his thankful devotion and obedience. God instituted marriage for man's happiness and welfare. Man himself appears as a holy and sinless creature who clearly bears the divine image in a bond of perfect trust toward God.
2. ADAM (5:1) - This sets forth the progenitors of the Savior from Adam through Seth until Noah. The individuals listed here are clearly incorporated in the New Testament genealogy of Christ in Luke's Gospel as the Savior's progenitors. At the same time we are told that even the descendants of Seth, through whom God established the public proclamation of his name, gradually despised their heritage and defected. They joined the descendants of Cain who were estranged from God, given to a life of self-glorification, arrogant pride, violence, and worldliness.
3. NOAH (6:9) - This descendent of Seth had by God's grace remained believing and devout. God preserved the eight souls of Noah's family in an ark while carrying out a judgment of universal destruction through the waters of the great flood. All of this is a part of God's saving activity in behalf of mankind, assuring the ultimate fulfillment of the Protevangelium. All of God's judgments, while indeed a manifestation of his holy wrath upon sin and obdurate unbelief, nevertheless stand in the service of his saving grace for the deliverance of believers.
4. SONS OF NOAH (10:1) - This shows us how the human race, as it developed anew, again to a great extent pushed God's gospel promise aside and sought self-glorification rather than clinging to God's promise of salvation.
5. SHEM (11:10) - This lists the descendants of Shem from Arphaxad down to Terah and his three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haran. This Toledoth therefore serves as a bridge to lead over to the account of God's kingdom activity among the patriarchs.
6. TERAH (11:27) - In the interest of his plan of salvation God chose Abram and trained him to trust wholly in the great complex of promises given to him. These promises all found their purpose and meaning in the final assurance that through Abram all the families of the earth should be blessed.
7. ISHMAEL (25:12) - As he does elsewhere in Genesis, Moses deals with the non-Messianic part of the family first. Ishmael's descendants are described under the twelve chieftains that God promised Abraham Ishmael would have (Gn. 17:20).

8. ISAAC (25:19) - The Messianic line continues with the birth of Jacob. After trying to secure the blessing for himself and being forced to flee to his uncle Laban in Mesopotamia, God gives him the blessing at Bethel. In Mesopotamia Jacob marries Laban's two daughters, and eleven of his twelve sons are born of his two wives and their two maid-servants. Jacob returns home having learned to trust in the Lord for his blessings. Chapter 34 dealing with the rape of Dinah and the revenge of Simeon and Levi on the Shechemites shows the danger to Israel's national identity of living among the Canaanites. "We'll settle among you and become one people with you" (Gn. 34:16).
9. ESAU (36:1) - Again Moses dismisses the non-Messianic part of the patriarchal family before continuing with the line of the Savior.
10. JACOB (37:2) - The final chapters of Genesis relate the story of Joseph, Jacob's eleventh and favorite son, the first son of his favorite wife Rachel. The Lord protects and sustains Joseph through trying situations so that he might use him later in Egypt to preserve the patriarchal family and the line of the Savior in desperate times. Chapter 38, relating the sordid account of Judah and Tamar, is inserted into the story to show the danger that living among the Canaanites posed for Israel's faith in and obedience to the Lord. In chapter 48 Joseph receives the double portion of the firstborn by having his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, elevated to the level of his brothers. In chapter 49 Judah, Jacob's fourth son by his wife Leah, receives the promise of the Messiah. With the death of Joseph recorded in chapter 50 the Lord is ready to allow Pharaoh to oppress his people so that they might be ready and willing when he is prepared to lead them out of Egypt.

CHAPTER THREE – (GENESIS) QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Give the basic outline for Genesis.
2. Why is "Genesis" a fitting title for this book?
3. In what respect do both the content as well as the narrative style of Genesis serve examples of "salvation history"?
4. Give the meaning of the word "Toledoth."
What significance is found in the number of Toledoth?
What is noteworthy about the twofold division of the Toledoth?
Is there anything significant about the sequence in which they follow?
5. What does this entire construction of the book of Genesis again demonstrate?
6. Review the contents of Genesis by showing the way in which each of the Toledoth bring out the history of God's plan of salvation for mankind.

FOR ADDED DISCUSSION

1. Below are some of the ways of translating "Toledoth." Which do you prefer?
 - a. NIV - "This is the account"
 - b. KJV - "These are the generations"
 - c. RSV - "These are the generations"
 - d. NEB - "This is the story"
 - e. TEV - "This is how ..." ... "This is the list of descendants" ... "This is the story"

2. Some commentators (Harrison, Morris, Wiseman) argue that the verse containing “Toledoth” is a “terminal phrase,” a sort of “colophon,” which belonged to the verses preceding it rather than an initial phrase (see Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 543-547). What is your opinion of this argument?
3. The first five Toledoth take us from the creation of this world up to the time of Abram (Gn 11:26). The next five Toledoth cover the period from Abram up to the burial of Jacob and the death of Joseph.

What is the approximate difference in the time span of each grouping? Do you see any missiological impact in this fact?

FOR ADDED READING

John Jeske, “The Chronology of the Old Testament,” *WLQ*, Vol. 77, No. 3, July, 1980.

John F. Brug, “The Astronomical Dating of Ancient History before 700,” Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary online essay file, 1988.

CHAPTER FOUR INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS; CALL OF MOSES (Ex 1-5)

The Hebrew name of this book comes from its opening words **וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת** – “These are the names.”

The Septuagint gives this book the designation Ἔξοδος - “exit, departure.” While this name has also become the English name of this book via the Vulgate’s “Exodus,” this name is somewhat misleading as far as the content of the book is concerned. Although Israel’s departure from Egypt is historically important, the theological significance of Exodus centers in Israel’s consecration as a covenant nation. The actual departure from Egypt forms a relatively small part of the book.

The book’s major divisions are as follows:

THE LORD’S COVENANT WITH THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

- I. The Deliverance of the Covenant People out of Egypt (Ch. 1-18)
 - A. Preparation for Deliverance. (1-4)
 - B. Beginning of the Conflict (5-6)
 - C. The Plagues (7-12)
 - D. The journey from Egypt to Sinai (13-18)
- II. The Establishing of the Covenant with Israel at Sinai (Ch. 19-24)
 - A. The Covenant Proposed (19)
 - B. The Decalogue and the Law (20-23)
 - C. Ratification of the Covenant (24)
- III. The Entry into the Place of the Covenant, the Tabernacle (Ch. 25-40)
 - A. Directions for the Tabernacle (25-31)
 - B. The Covenant Broken and Restored (32-34)
 - C. Completion of the Tabernacle (35-40)

Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers constitute the Torah in the narrower sense of the word, in the sense of law or legislation. Genesis, as we learned, is the record of the beginnings of the Kingdom of God. Deuteronomy recapitulates the lawgiving and calls for faithful observance of the same. The three middle books present the Torah itself, with each book emphasizing the following aspects of the law:

- Exodus - the moral law;
- Leviticus - the ceremonial law;
- Numbers - the political or civil law.

Exodus begins with the death of Joseph and takes us to the setting up of the tabernacle at Sinai, thus covering approximately 360 years (Joseph was 30 years old when he became overseer in Egypt. He died, according to Genesis 50:26, at age 110. The entire time of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, according to Exodus 12:40, was 430 years). Beginning with a list of the names of the children of Israel who went down to Egypt, and ending with the setting up of the tabernacle, where Jehovah dwelt in the midst of his people, the book of Exodus tells us how Israel developed into God's covenant people.

Dating Between Genesis and Exodus (figuring backwards)

- 967 BC - Solomon begins building temple (see below)
- 1447 BC - Biblical date for exodus, 480 years before Solomon's temple (1 Kgs 6:1)
- 1527 BC - Moses is born eighty years earlier
- 1580-1570 BC - Range of dates for the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt by the Theban founder of the 18th dynasty, Ahmose.
- 1730 BC - Approximate time of the Hyksos ("rulers of foreign lands") takeover of Lower Egypt establishing the 15th dynasty, a dynasty of foreign pharaohs.
- 1877 BC - Jacob enters Egypt and stands before Pharaoh 430 years before the exodus (Ex. 12:40). Joseph is probably 39 years old.
- 1806 BC - Joseph dies at 110, 71 years after Jacob enters Egypt

So there are 279 years between the death of Joseph and the birth of Moses.

The book, along with Numbers, also serves as a warning against ingratitude and disobedience (See 1 Cor 10, Hebrews 4, and Psalm 95).

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PART I of EXODUS
THE DELIVERANCE OF THE COVENANT PEOPLE OUT OF EGYPT (Ch 1-18)

EXODUS 1

v. 8 "Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt." Archer and others believe that the new king of this verse must be a Hyksos king coming to power some twenty to thirty years after the death of Joseph. They believe the quotes of 1:8-10 make no sense in the mouth of a native Egyptian king. Although both the Israelites and the Hyksos were Semites, the Israelite sympathies may have been with the Egyptians because of the friendly way they dealt with Joseph and his family. Therefore, the Hyksos saw them as enemies and oppressed them. The king of v. 15, then, who attempted wiping out Israel as a nation, would have been a native king of the 18th dynasty, either Ahmose or one of his successors, who hated everything Semitic and sought to cleanse the delta region of their presence (see Archer, p. 228-233). Obviously, we cannot be dogmatic about these matters.

This verse, together with what precedes (Israel's multiplication as a people) and follows (Pharaoh's acts of oppression), raises the question as to where Israel's sojourn in Egypt and the exodus fit into world history.

As might be expected, there is considerable difference of opinion concerning these matters. Among those who favor a later date for the exodus (1290 or even 1225 B.C.) are H.H. Rowley, Jack Finegan, E.F. Harrison, W.F. Albright, and many others, including probably the majority of Evangelicals. The earlier date (ca. 1440 BC) is supported by Gleason Archer, Merrill Unger, J. Davis, Keil-Delitzsch, and men of a more conservative bent. Archaeological evidence is argued in support of both views, with Nelson Glueck and Kathleen Kenyon opting for a later date, and John Garstang, John Bimson, and Bryant Wood defending the earlier date on the basis of the excavations at Jericho. R.K. Harrison writes: "Attempts to establish a chronology for the Exodus have resulted in some of the most perplexing problems in the entire panorama of Hebrew history" (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, p 316). It might be mentioned here that a number of liberal scholars reject all biblical evidence and claim there was no exodus at all.

A person's position will depend at least in part on his attitude toward the inerrancy of Scripture. A significant passage in this matter is 1 Kings 6:1, which places the exodus 480 years before the building of the temple, which occurred "in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel." Edwin R. Thiele's chronology of the kings, places the death of Solomon at 931 BC (*The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, p. 254f). This places the building of the temple at 967 BC. Add to this 480 years and the result is 1447 BC. Even if these dates are not precise, the exodus would be dated to the 15th century BC. If we connect these dates to the standard (but very problematic) chronology of Egyptian history, two New Kingdom dynasties come into consideration as the setting for the exodus:

18th Dynasty (Early Exodus)

Thutmose I, ca. 1540 BC

Thutmose II, ca. 1520 BC (Hatshepsut)

Thutmose III, ca. 1500-1450 BC (Oppression)

Amenhotep II, ca. 1450-20 BC (Exodus)

19th Dynasty (Late Exodus)

Seti I, ca. 1322-1300 BC

Rameses II, ca. 1300-1235 BC

Merneptah, ca. 1235-1220 B.C.

Accordingly, the pharaoh of the oppression following the early dating would be Thutmose III, whose long reign together with Hatshepsut's regency would fit the biblical record. The Pharaoh of the exodus, then, would be Amenhotep II (also known as Amenophis). Amenhotep's poor war record would correspond with the catastrophic loss of chariots in the Red Sea. In this view, then, the "new King, who did not know about Joseph," would come out of the dynasty which expelled the Hyksos, Semitic invaders, who ruled Egypt in the 16th century BC. This would provide a natural setting for the oppression of the Israelites, who would be regarded as kin to the Hyksos by native Egyptians. In "Against Apion" the 1st-century historian Josephus identified the Exodus with the expulsion of the Hyksos. If this were the case, the pharaoh of Exodus would be one of the Theban pharaohs of the 17th or early-18th Dynasty, who fought against the Hyksos, especially Ahmose I (1570-1546 BC or 1550-1525 BC). This, however, does not seem to mesh with the apparent Delta headquarters of the pharaoh.

According to the later reckoning the pharaoh of the oppression would be Seti I or Rameses II, also a ruler with a long reign, and the pharaoh of the exodus would be Merneptah. Against the latter identification would be the Merneptah Stele, which names Israel as already in Canaan during Merneptah's rule.

Although the biblical data strongly supports a 15th century exodus, we cannot be too certain of the pharaohs of the oppression since there are significant uncertainties with Egyptian chronology in spite of the confidence with which the figures are printed on the page. There are significant variations in the three standard chronologies of Egypt, and the astronomical basis for those chronologies is not very sound.

Actually, the identity of the pharaoh is not a great concern since the Bible shows no interest in this information.

The archaeological aspects of the dating of the exodus and conquest will be discussed in more detail in connection with the book of Joshua.

EXODUS 2

v. 1 “A man of the house of Levi.” According to Ex 6:20 and Nu 26:59 Moses descended from the Levitical family of Kohath. There are apparent gaps in the genealogy. It is most likely that the gaps are in the middle of the list, and Amram and his wife Jochebed were Moses’ parents. Usually the two ends of the genealogy are the critical data. The gap here probably comes between the founder of the clan and Moses’ immediate forebears. (See notes on 6:13-26 for other possibilities.)

v. 2 In this verse the newborn child is described as בִּטּוֹן , a generic word that isn’t very descriptive. Most parents consider their children to be most beautiful. In Acts 7:20 Stephen describes him ἀσπίος τῷ θεῷ, which could be translated “beautiful” or “special in God’s sight.” Was it clear in some way to Moses’ parents that God had special plans for this child? Regardless of how we are to understand these words, He 11:23 says that the parents’ act of not obeying the ruler’s cruel command was more than just parents protecting their child. It was an act of faith.

All the items connected with this story (Nile, papyrus basket, reeds, etc.) are typical of Egypt, as historians frequently point out, again underscoring Mosaic authorship.

v. 4 “His sister ...” No doubt Miriam (Nu 16:59).

v. 5 “Pharaoh’s daughter ...” In the Talmud she is named as Bathia (Batyā), but we know of no basis for this identification. Other traditional names are Tharmuth and Merris. Some of the pharaohs had dozens of daughters so there is no shortage of candidates.

According to Stephen (Ac 7:22) Moses received an education “in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.”

v. 11-15 Moses’ act is referred to by Stephen (Ac 7:25-26) and in Hebrews 11:24-26 as an act of faith, in that he chose to put in his lot with his own suffering people. It was at the same time, however, like the act of Peter in cutting of the servant’s ear, an impulsive act which broke the rules of justice. According to Acts 7:22 Moses was 40 years old. Moses would have been 40 around 1487 BC, 390 years after Jacob entered Egypt. Given the fact that the Lord had told Abraham that his descendants would spend 400 years in a foreign country (Gen. 15:13), Moses may have seen himself as a self-appointed deliverer whose time had come. God’s time had not come, however, and Moses’ attempt failed.

“... went to live in Midian.” The Midianites were descended from Abraham through Keturah (Gn 25:24). Since they dwelt largely to the East, we conclude this group under Jethro was a branch dwelling on the Sinaitic peninsula, near Mount Sinai or Horeb.

v. 18 Reuel. In Ex 3:1 his name or title is Jethro, “his excellency.” He is a “priest of Midian” (v. 16), the spiritual head of his tribe. Reuel means “friend of God.”

v. 22 Moses’ sons: Gershom and Eliezer (cf. Ex 18:3).

While the children of Israel were groaning under the oppression of Egypt, God was preparing the way for

their deliverance, as this chapter shows us in the miraculous saving of Moses, his training in the wisdom of the Egyptians, and his seasoning in the arid Sinai peninsula.

v. 23 “And God remembered ...” an anthropomorphism for “God took action.” Moses served Jethro for a period of 40 years (cf. Ac 7:30 and Ex 7:6). God chose his time to take action.

EXODUS 3

v. 1 “Horeb, the mountain of God.” No doubt so-called in anticipation of the revelation which Moses was to receive. In the Old Testament Horeb and Sinai are used as equivalent terms, although Horeb may refer to the entire range of mountains which rise to a height of 8,000 ft., and Sinai to a particular peak in this range. The NIV “far side of the desert” is better translated “west side of the desert.”

v. 2 “The angel of the Lord appeared to him ...” a manifestation of the LORD himself (see Gn 16:7; 22:11; 31:11-13; 48:15-16, etc.).

v. 6 The LORD Yahweh makes himself known as the God of the patriarchs.

v. 12 God promises that he will bring his people to worship on this same mountain. This was fulfilled when Israel here entered into a covenant with Yahweh/Jehovah (Ex 24).

v. 14 “God said unto Moses, ‘I am who I am.’” (אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה). The name indicates the absolute timelessness, constancy, and unchangeableness of God, as we see from the imperfect tense of the Hebrew verb, expressing his sovereignty and majesty. Jesus says of himself, “Before Abraham was, I am” (πρὶν Ἀβραάμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί - Jn 8:58) thereby identifying himself with the God of Israel (See also He 13:8 and Rev. 1:4 & 8).

The name which God here reveals to Moses also stresses God as a personal being, the personal God of salvation for all time. This is God’s own explanation of the tetragrammaton יהוה, which simply changes the first person “I am” to the third person “He is.” The Hebrew word יהי, “to be,” was originally יהי, with the third person יהי in the imperfect. The Masoretic pointing יהוה / יהוה. (Jehovah) belongs to a time when the Jews were afraid to utter this name at all and substituted אדני (Lord), the vowels of which therefore were placed as Keri (to be read) in place of the Kethib (to be written). When the Hebrew word אדני precedes the tetragrammaton, the tetragrammaton is pointed יהוה and is pronounced “*elohim*.” Another substitution for the Tetragrammaton is “The Name.”

The name later incorrectly pronounced *Jehovah* (יהוה) occurs for the first time in Gn 2:4 in connection with *elohim*, and is identified as the God of the history of salvation, the God of the covenant. The letters יהוה were very likely originally pronounced *Yahweh*.

Ex 3:14 reveals the absolute independence of God, the absolute constancy of God, and the fact that all his attributes are a part of his essence. Luther translates: “*Ich werde sein, der ich werde sein*.” The most

complete exegesis of יהוה is found in the Lord's own "sermon" on his name in Exodus 34:5-7. We will give fuller consideration to the significance of this name at that point.

With these words the LORD also distinguishes himself from the gods of Egypt and other nations.

v. 18 Moses was to confront Pharaoh first with an easier option, i.e., to let Israel take a journey to worship the Lord. God knew in advance, however, that Pharaoh would refuse, proving beyond all doubt that Pharaoh was without excuse.

v. 22 "Every woman is to ask her neighbor." The KJV "borrow" is an incorrect translation of the Hebrew שאל. Opponents of Scripture have frequently used this passage of the Bible to throw contempt on the word of God, claiming that God here encouraged his people to "borrow" under false pretenses. The passage clearly states that the Israelites asked without intending to restore, and the Egyptians gave without hope of receiving back, since God had made their hearts favorably disposed to the Israelites. In fact, this asking, or demanding, was small recompense for the years of slavery which Israel had been forced to bear in Egypt.

Note: Exodus 3:1-12 provides an excellent text for a service of installation, especially the Lord's words "So now, go. I am sending you ... I will be with you."

EXODUS 4

v. 1 Moses continues his objections, which go back to the preceding chapter. In every case, however, the Lord has a ready answer, basing this not upon human argumentation, but upon the strength which he himself would supply.

Moses:

"Who am I ... ?"
"Who shall I say sent me?"
"What if they do not believe me?"
"I am not eloquent."
"Send someone else."

God:

"I will be with you." (Ex 3:11-12)
"I AM sent you." (Ex 3:13-14)
Three signs (Ex 4:1-8)
"I will help you speak (Ex 4:10-11)
The Lord's anger ... Aaron (Ex 4:13-14)

Moses' reluctance to go is understandable, taking into consideration the entire situation. Humanly speaking this shepherd of Horeb had many strikes against him, including his reason for having fled from Egypt many years ago. Moses may also have been bitter over the fact that when he was ready forty years earlier, God was not. In addition, we should remember that since God's appearance to Jacob, 430 years before this, God had never appeared to any Israelite.

An excellent study for called servants of God to reassure themselves as to where their strength can be found to do the Lord's work!

The three signs described in this chapter (rod to snake; hand leprous and healed; water of the Nile to blood) have many fanciful and allegorical explanations. We prefer to interpret all three as signs provided by God as a testimony to Israel and to Egypt of God's presence and power accompanying his chosen messenger. Edersheim adds an interesting comment: "For the first time in Old Testament history this power (of doing miracles) was bestowed upon man" (*Bible History of the Old Testament*, Vol 1, p 50).

v. 21 "But I will harden his heart ..." The statement that God would harden Pharaoh's heart, as indicated

in this passage (קִיָּחַ, Piel form of קִיָּחַ, “cause to be hard; harden”) has raised questions concerning the cause of impenitence. Does this rest with God or with man? In this passage the Lord gives a summary of what is eventually going to happen in the case of Pharaoh.

In studying the passages in Exodus note the difference and the progression of four kinds of passages: 1) prophecies of the hardening of the heart, 2) statements of the condition of hardness, 3) human action of hardening the heart, 4) divine action of hardening the heart.

- 1) Exodus 4:21 The LORD said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.”
- 2) Exodus 8:19 The magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said.
- 3) Exodus 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.
- 4) Exodus 9:12,35 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses.³⁵ So Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had said through Moses.

Note: Divine hardening does not begin until Exodus 9:12, the 6th plague.

Note also the three different vocables for “harden”:

1. קִיָּחַ: to fetter, brace up (LXX, σκληρύνω); in the qal of a condition, the hardness of the human heart; in the piel as a causative, of the divine action of hardening.
2. קָשָׁה: to harden (LXX, σκληρύνω); the causative is hiphil.
3. כָּבֵד: to be heavy, insensitive (LXX, βαρύνω); the causative is hiphil.

As we follow the entire situation of Moses with Pharaoh, we find that in the first instances the hardening of heart is ascribed to Pharaoh himself. Either the qal of קִיָּחַ is used (“Pharaoh’s heart became hard,” an intransitive form of the Qal. -- Ex 7:13; 22; 8:15; 9:35), or the qal of כָּבֵד is used, meaning that

“Pharaoh’s heart was hard” (Ex 7:14; 9:17). Still another verb, קָשָׁה is used in Ex 13:15 which means that “Pharaoh made his heart hard.” The process in Pharaoh’s case, in other words, is progressive. After Pharaoh hardened his own heart against God’s revealed will during the first five plagues, the LORD himself begins to take a hand and the hardening on the part of the LORD begins (Ex 9:12).

Thus it was not until after Pharaoh himself had repeatedly rejected God’s call to repentance, manifesting an obdurate, defiant spirit, that God himself stepped in and completed the process. Nowhere do we hear that Pharaoh believed. His acts of resistance to God’s will were repeated. They became a habit. Finally a complete state of obduracy and insusceptibility set in, which is God’s own final judgment upon the

impenitent sinner. It is in this sense that we understand the words: “I will harden his heart.” (Confer also Ez 33:11; 1 Tm 2:4; 2 Pe 2:9).

“Hence Pharaoh (of whom we read, ‘For this purpose have I let you live to show you my power, so that my name may be declared throughout all the earth’ [Ex. 9:16]) did not perish because God did not want to grant him salvation or because it was God’s good pleasure that he should be damned and lost. For God ‘is not wishing that any should perish,’ nor has he any ‘pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live ...’ “But that God hardened Pharaoh’s heart so that Pharaoh continued to sin and became the more obdurate the more he was admonished was a punishment for his preceding sin and his horrible tyranny with which he oppressed the children of Israel by many, various, and most inhuman devices contrary to the voice of his conscience. But after God arranged to have his Word proclaimed and his will revealed to Pharaoh, and he deliberately rebelled against all the admonitions and warnings, God withdrew his hand from him, and so his heart became hardened and calloused, and God executed his judgment on him, for he was indeed guilty of ‘hell-fire.’ The holy apostle adduces Pharaoh’s example [Romans 9] for the sole purpose of thereby setting forth the righteousness of God which God manifests toward the impenitent and despisers of his Word, and in no way does he want us to infer that God had not wanted to grant Pharaoh or any other person eternal life, or that in his secret counsel God had ordained him to eternal damnation so that he could not and might not be saved.” (Tappert, *Book of Concord*, “Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article XI,” paragraphs 54 and 84-86, p. 630-631).

v. 21 “Israel is my firstborn son,” confer Ex 19:5; Dt 32:18; Is 64:8; Jer 3:4; Mal 1:6; 2:10.

v. 24-26 On account of the brevity of this narrative it is somewhat obscure. Who was God seeking to kill, Moses or his son? How was God threatening to kill? Was it a sudden seizure, a fatal disease? Was it because of his neglect in circumcising his son? Had Moses neglected to do this out of deference to Zipporah? Was one son already circumcised and the others not (note the singular “son” in v. 25)?

In any case, Zipporah now does herself what had been neglected, although it was repugnant to her. She concedes that the act must be done to retain her “bridegroom of blood.” By touching Moses with the blood of the foreskin she removes the offense.

Moses, who is to be the great leader of God’s people, is shown how earnest God is concerning the keeping of his commandments (confer Gn 17:14; also Ro 4:11), a lesson for us as well.

EXODUS 5

This chapter is preliminary. It presents the first visit of Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, to make known to him the will of their God. Pharaoh’s reply is to increase Israel’s labors, thus enlightening Moses as to what he can expect from Pharaoh. When Israel complains, Moses takes the problem to the Lord, preparing us for the Lord’s assurances in chapter 6. Moses’ words, “O Lord, why ...” (Ex 5:22) serve as an excellent text on a pastor’s intercessory role as the man in the middle. God answers the “why” in Exodus 6:1: “Now you will see ...”

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Ex 1-5)

1. What is the theme of the book of Exodus? Why is the title of the book therefore somewhat misleading?
2. Show how the main parts of Exodus fit under this theme.

3. When Paul said to Agrippa: “It was not done in a corner” (Ac 26:26), he emphasized how God chose the right time and the right place to reveal his salvation in Christ. By means of this choice the good news could be spread abroad throughout the world quickly. How can we apply these same words to the Exodus miracle?
4. Which two general views are held concerning the date of the Exodus? Why do conservative Bible students favor the early date? Explain how the early date (about 1447 BC) fits into Egyptian history.
5. What purpose did Israel’s 430 years in Egypt serve according to God’s plan? Did Israel continue to serve the Lord during these “years of silence”? (See Ex 1:21; 2:6-18; Jos 5:3ff, but see Ez. 20:7-8, Am 5:26-27).
6. Were the Hebrew midwives guilty of “unwarranted deception” according to Ex 1:19?
7. Explain the “good” and the “bad” side of Moses’ attempt to execute justice according to Ex 2:11-12 (See He 11:24-27).
8. According to Acts 7:23 and 7:30 how many years did Moses spend in exile as a lowly shepherd before God called him? What application lies in this fact?
9. Explain the term “angel of the Lord” (מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה) in Exodus 3:2 (See. Gn 16:7; 22:11; 31:11-13; 48:15-16).
10. In what various ways does God reveal himself to Moses in Exodus 2? Show the relationship between the “I AM” and the “LORD” revelations of God’s name. What attributes of God are emphasized in this NAME by which God reveals himself?
11. Why is Moses’ reluctance to accept God’s call understandable? Relate Moses’ attempts to excuse himself with the call to special service as a minister of Christ.
12. Expand on the incongruity portrayed in Exodus 4:20.
13. Explain the passage “I (God) will harden his (Pharaoh’s) heart” (Ex 4:21) in the light of Ez 33:11; 1 Tm 2:4; 2 Pe 3:9.
14. By what strange incident recorded in Exodus 4 does God show that he is serious about the covenant of circumcision? Interpret the gist of Zipporah’s words: “Surely, you are a bridegroom of blood to me” (Ex 4:25).
15. Describe Pharaoh’s reaction to Moses’ request, Moses’ question (Ex 5:22), and the Lord’s answer (Ex 6:1). How can we apply this situation to present day circumstances?

FOR ADDED CONSIDERATION

- A. In connection with the date of the Exodus, for further reading we recommend:

Redating the Exodus and Conquest, John J. Bimson. For a survey of the issues and a defense of the early date.

Bryant G. Wood, “Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*

16(2) (March/April 1990): p 44-58.

Bryant G. Wood, "Dating Jericho's Destruction: Bienkowski Is Wrong on All Counts," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16:05, Sep/Oct 1990.

Bryant G. Wood, "The Walls of Jericho," *Bible and Spade* 12:2 (1999).

Bruins & van der Plicht, "Tell es-Sultan (Jericho): Radiocarbon Results of Short-Lived Cereal and Multiyear Charcoal Samples from the End of the Middle Bronze Age," *Radiocarbon* 37:2, 1995. Radiocarbon dates sited against Wood.

A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Gleason L. Archer, p. 239-252.

Moses and the Gods of Egypt, J.J. Davis, p 16-37.

Archaeology and the Old Testament, Merrill F. Unger, p 140-152.

The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings, Edwin R. Thiele, p 254 f.

B. What occasion or application is suggested by each of the following texts?

Ex 3:1-6

Ex 3:11-15

Ex 4:1-17

Ex 4:20

Ex 4:19-6:1

CHAPTER FIVE THE PLAGUES AND THE EXODUS (Ex 6-13)

EXODUS 6

v. 1-8 Here the negative critics see support for their claim that the Yahweh-name was not known before the days of Moses. Critics claim that in the early patriarchal period the tribal name of God was God

Almighty – אֱלֹהֵי שָׁדַי. Now Moses was about to reveal the name Yahweh – יְהוָה – for the first time as the God of Israel. This is a misinterpretation of the passages.

The fact of the matter is that the name Yahweh occurs frequently in Genesis. God did reveal himself to Abraham as Yahweh, the God of the Covenant (יְהוָה). Abraham builds an altar unto this name (Gn 12:8; 13:4; 21:33). He calls upon this name (Gn 22:14; 24:3 and 7). When in Ex 3:13 Moses expects that the Israelites will ask who sent him, God's answer implies that he will be recognized by the name Yahweh.

It could be argued that the occurrence of the Tetragrammaton in Genesis is an updating by Moses to the name used in his own time, but another solution seems more probable. Here the point is that although the name has already been introduced to Israel, its full implications have not as yet been made known to them. God had surely not forgotten his covenant with the patriarchs and with their descendants (v. 4-5). Now the redemptive events to follow would reveal aspects of this covenant hitherto not fully known (Confer v. 3 and especially 6-7).

Another solution is to punctuate v. 3 as a question, as the NIV note does, “And by my name the LORD, did I not make myself known to them?”

v. 13-26 At this point a genealogical table is inserted. Edward Young comments: “Obviously this is the proper place for such an insertion. Moses has received his final commission to Pharaoh. He is now shown as the leader of Israel and is ready for the great conflict with the oppressor. What better place could there be for the account of the line of Moses and Aaron than at precisely this point?” (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 64).

Obviously some links in the genealogy of Moses and Aaron are omitted. 1 Chronicles 7:20-27 shows 11 links between Joseph and Joshua. Ex 6:20-26 shows only 4 links for the same period (Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses). The gap likely follows Kohath, founder of the clan.

There is another way to view this information. A member of the nation of Israel was identified by the household of the father, בֵּית אָבִי, to which he belonged. This household or family was a subpart of his clan, מִשְׁפַּחָה, which was a subpart of his tribe, שֵׁבֶט. (For an example of this identification in action see Joshua 7:16-18.) Since this is Moses' official introduction, he is introduced as a member of the tribe of Levi, from the clan of Kohath, and the family of Amram. The four generations mentioned also remind us of the four generations the Lord told Abraham would pass before they were delivered from a foreign land (Gn. 15:16).

Note also in the lists of names the three divisions in the tribe of Levi according to sons Gershon, Kohath, and Merari (v 16), and the names of Aaron's sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, Ithamar (v. 23). These names

play significant roles in Israel’s later history.

It is somewhat puzzling that the genealogies of Reuben and Simeon are included here. Perhaps this is simply because the starting block of the genealogy was taken and pasted in as a whole. Perhaps it also serves to remind us that Levi was one of the “three less blessed,” and it shows how the fortunes of this tribe were beginning to turn.

EXODUS 7, 8, 9, 10

These chapters of Exodus contain the story of 9 of the 10 plagues. Their purpose is set forth by God himself: “That you may know that I am the Lord” (Ex 6:7; 10:2; 16:12; 29:42), “and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord” (Ex 7:5 and 17). Thus there are both law and gospel elements in the action. To Israel God’s power meant deliverance. To the Egyptians the plagues demonstrated God’s sovereignty over all things. By Pharaoh, because of his unbelief, they were received with hardening of heart.

The first 9 plagues form a symmetrical scheme, subdivided into three groups of three each:

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Blood (7:14-25) | 4. Flies (8:20-32) | 7. Hail (9:13-35) |
| 2. Frogs (8:1-15) | 5. Murrain (9:1-7) | 8. Locusts (10:1-20) |
| 3. Gnats (8:16-19) | 6. Boils (9:8-12) | 9. Darkness (10:21-27) |

Ten Plagues (NIV)	Blood	Frogs	Gnats	Flies	On Livestock	Boils	Hail	Locusts	Darkness	Death to Firstborn
עשר מגפות	דם	צפרדעיה	כנים	ערב	דבר	שדין	ברד	ארבה	חשך	מכת בכורות
Magicians duplicate	●	●								
Warning given aforetime	●	●		●	●		●	●		●
Israel exempt from plague				●	●		●		●	●
Lord hardens Pharaoh’s heart						●		●	●	●
Special removal		●		●			●			
Special action	Staff	Hand	Staff			Soot	Staff	Hand		
Intensification	P. Did not even take to heart	Pray God to take it away	This is the finger of God	Go but not far; pray for me	Set time; investigation made	God hardened P’s heart	Full force	Worst since land founded	Worst since land settled	Go!
Contra false view of God and his creation: the Egyptian concept of MAAT	Contra powers over the waters		Contra powers over the dust of the earth		Contra powers over living creatures		Contra powers over things that grow		C. Supreme powers In heaven above (Ra) On earth below (sa Ra)	

In each series the first and second plague is announced to Pharaoh in advance. The third is given without previous warning. The series of 3 x 3 leads up to a climax in the tenth plague, showing completeness. Within the plagues there is an increase in severity. They may have extended over a period of about 10 months.

The Egyptian magicians vie with Moses in the first two plagues. At the third they acknowledge the hand of God to be present: “This is the finger of God” (8:19), and from then on they are out of consideration. With plagues 4, 5, and 6 there is a distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians, the Israelites being spared.

The first nine plagues were natural wonders in the sense that they were already known phenomena. Their severity and sudden disappearance at the word of Moses marked them as miracles of God’s power. Each

plague was directed against some phenomenon of nature worshiped by the Egyptians as in some way related to their gods.

Pharaoh's progressive hardening of heart we have already treated under Exodus 4. At the close of the ninth plague Moses and Pharaoh broke off all personal relations. It is clear that Exodus 11:1-3 refers to instructions given previously to Moses, while 11:4-8 is the parting warning concerning the coming of the tenth plague, which follows immediately after 10:29. The NIV translates 11:1 correctly: "Now the Lord had said to Moses ..." (וַיֹּאמֶר - consecutive here used in the pluperfect sense!) In plague number ten, in other words, God dealt directly with Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and not through mediation.

EXODUS 12

This chapter presents to us first of all the regulations given by God to Moses concerning the PASSOVER (פֶּסַח). These are found in the first portion of the chapter (v. 1-28), and the concluding verses (v. 43-50). In between these verses we have the account of Israel's deliverance from Egypt through the killing of the firstborn of all people and livestock in Egypt (Tenth Plague).

The Passover was instituted as a memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. It was symbolic of Israel's beginning as the people of Yahweh. According to verses 1 and 2 it was to be celebrated in the same month every year, concerning which God declared: "This month is to be for you the first month." The Passover month, Abib, was therefore the beginning of Israel's ecclesiastical year. After the Babylonian captivity this month received the name Nisan. (This month corresponds roughly to the end of March and the beginning of April in our calendar.)

Looking at the ordinances concerning the Passover in the light of the New Testament it is clear that the Passover was to have a prophetic bearing upon the person and work of the Savior. Through the blood of a lamb the firstborn in Israel were spared the fate of the Egyptian sons. They were delivered from the wrath of God. They were delivered through a vicarious death.

That this observance is a type of Christ is clear from various ordinances of the Passover itself in the light of New Testament fulfillment. This applies first of all to the Passover Lamb (the Hebrew אֵזֶרָה refers to "a young one," either of sheep or of goats, v. 3), which fits numerous references of Christ as the Lamb of God (Confer esp. Jn 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7). This lamb was to be "without defect" (v. 5), just as Christ was "a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Pe 1:19). The lamb was to be slaughtered (v. 6), or sacrificed, even as Christ gave himself as "a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph 5:2; He 10:14). The Israelites were to take some of the blood (v. 7) and put it on their doorframes as a token of deliverance from the angel of death ("When I see the blood, I will pass over you" v. 13). Even so we are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pe 1:19; see also Ac 20:28; Ro 3:25; 5:9; Eph 1:7; 2:13; Col 1:20; He 9:22; 1 Jn 1:7; Re 5:9). Concerning the lamb the people were not to "break any of the bones (v. 46), just as none of the Savior's bones were broken after his death on the cross (Jn 19:36).

No doubt the regulations for the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, also found here in Exodus 12:14-20, were given to Moses sometime later (see v. 17: "That I brought" etc.). The close connection between the meaning of this feast and the Passover itself explains its inclusion here.

The Keil-Delitzsch Commentary has this to say concerning this feast: The unleavened cakes were symbolical of the new life as cleansed from the leaven of a sinful nature. For this reason the Israelites were to put away all the leaven of the Egyptian nature, the leaven of malice and wickedness, and by

eating pure and holy bread and meeting for the worship of God to show that they were walking in newness of life” (p. 21) ... Paul brings this picture into focus in 1 Corinthians 5:7 where he tells us to “get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast,” connecting this also with “Christ, our Passover lamb,” who “has been sacrificed.” He then urges Christians to “keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor 5:8). One can hardly preach on this Easter Epistle in the old historical series without carefully explaining the Old Testament picture of the Passover and its connection with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, relating this to the significance of Easter for a Christian’s walk in newness of life.

A connection is plainly implied between the Passover and the Lord’s Supper. Both are memorial feasts (Ex 12:14 – 1 Cor 11:24ff). Both imply a fellowship of faith (Ex 12:44 – 1 Cor 10:17). Both exclude “the stranger” (Ex 12:43, 45, 48 – 1 Cor 11:27). The relation of the Passover to the rite of circumcision is also the same as the Lord’s Supper is to baptism. Both circumcision and baptism establish the covenant with God and admit into fellowship with God and his church. Both Passover and Lord’s Supper proclaim and strengthen this bond. The new sacraments in place of the old are God’s way of enabling the Gentiles to enter his church of the New Testament.

The intermediate verses of Exodus 12 (v. 29-42) describe the killing of the firstborn in Egypt and Pharaoh’s urgent request to have the Israelites leave. Both the “borrowing” of the KJV and the “plundering” of the NIV are misleading translations of the Israelites demand for back pay of precious metals, jewels, and raiment from the Egyptians. The departure of the Israelites from Rameses to Succoth completes the section (see map).

The number given (“about 600,000 men on foot” v. 37), adding wives and children, would give us a figure of about 2 million souls. Many question the fact that 70 souls could multiply into such a vast number in 430 years’ time. Actually, as the Keil-Delitzsch Commentary points out (p. 29), even based on an ordinary number of births this increase would be nothing unusual. Add to this the blessing of God to Abraham (Gn 15:13-21) and one sees no reason why the figure should be called into question. It should be noted here also that “many other people went up with them” (v. 38). This was a crowd of mixed people (עַרְבֵי רַב) from various nations, who attached themselves to the Israelites and who later on became a snare to them (See. Nu 11:4).

The number “430 years” (v. 41) as the length of Israel’s stay in Egypt “is not critically doubtful, nor are the 430 years to be reduced to 215 by an arbitrary interpolation, such as we find in the LXX” (KD Comm., p. 30). Questions have been raised about the 430 years in Egypt. In Gn 15:13 the number is given as 400 years. This simply appears to be a round number which should cause no real problem. Acts 13:19 gives about 450 years for the time in Egypt and the Wilderness and the entry to the land. Again this appears to be a round number for 400 + 40 or 430 + 40. Some versions of the Septuagint say that 430 is the number of year in Egypt *and Canaan* (NIV note). A simple explanation of this variant is that it is a correction of Christian Septuagints to reconcile this verse with Galatians 3:17, which states that the “law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God” (with Abraham). Paul here is contrasting law and gospel, so he very likely reckons the era of promise with Jacob who received the promise before he went to Egypt. It is not necessary to adjust the stay in Egypt down to 215 years. The “fly in the ointment” with this explanation is that the apparatus of the BHS lists “Egypt and Canaan” also as the reading of the Samaritan Pentateuch.

EXODUS 13

v. 1-2 “Consecrate to me every firstborn male ... whether man or animal.” Since the firstborn of Israel had been spared, it was appropriate that these be set apart for the Lord’s service as a reminder of God’s

grace to his people. So Israel was consecrated to God in its first-born (see Ex 4:22; 22:29). According to Numbers 3:12-13 and Numbers 3:40-48 the Levites were later to take the place of the firstborn in their special service. All the firstborn in excess of the Levites were to be “redeemed” at the price of 5 shekels.

v. 16 “And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead ...”

(Heb.: **לְאֹת...וּלְטוֹטֶפֶת**). The Jews took this literally, wearing phylacteries or small pouches made from the skin of ceremonially clean animals, strapped to the forehead and to the left arm of males. Inside the pouches were strips of parchment on which were written certain passages from the law. God, of course, wanted the consecration of the firstborn and the feast of the unleavened bread to be constant inner reminders for heart, mind, and action, not simply outward wearing of phylacteries.

v. 17 God’s purpose of leading toward the southeast instead of the more direct route toward Gaza is given here: “If they face war they might change their minds and return to Egypt.” At this time the major obstacle was probably not the Philistines, but the Egyptian forts which guarded the frontier. The frontier was also blocked by a 200-foot-wide barrier canal, which may have run from the Mediterranean Sea to Pi Hahiroth, and which may have intimidated the Israelites. This route out of Egypt was called “the Way of Horus” by the Egyptians. The mention of Philistines may be a later updating of the name from an Israelite point of view, or it may refer to the Philistines that dwelt there in patriarchal time (Gn 21:32 and 26:1). These were a peace-loving people, not the more warlike Philistines who migrated to southwest Canaan during the period of the judges.

The expression in v. 18 translated in the KJV as “harnessed” and in the NIV as “armed for battle” simply means “equipped” (**חֲמֻשִׁים**), actually “prepared for the march,” as contrasted with fleeing in disorderly array.

v. 19 “Moses took the bones of Joseph with him ...” Confer Gn 50:25.

v. 20 The Israelites’ journey led to Succoth, a rendezvous point, which was probably in the Wadi Tumilat, then to Etham, where Egypt ends and the desert of Sinai begins, and from there to Pi Hahiroth. The exact location of these places has been much disputed. Current ideas of site locations will be discussed in more detail as part of the study of the date of the exodus and conquest at the beginning of Joshua. If Succoth was a city, it was probably at Tel Mashkhuta, and Etham was near the east end of the Wadi Tumilat. See the map at the end of this chapter.

v. 21 How God led Israel (v. 18) is here described: “In a pillar of cloud” by day and “in a pillar of fire” by night. This cloud, which was the visible representative of the invisible God, took on various forms: a bright column to lead by day; a column of fire to lead by night; a dividing wall to separate the Israelites and the Egyptians at the Red Sea; a cloud which stood still above the tabernacle; a cloud in which appeared “the glory of the Lord” (Ex 16:10; 40:34; Nu 17:7). It protected Israel from heat by day as well as lighting its path by night. This manifestation of God’s presence did not depart from Israel as long as the people continued in the wilderness.

In Ex 13:17 we read that God did not lead the Israelites “through the Philistine country” along the heavily fortified coastal road. He rather led them toward the “Red Sea” (**יַם־סוּף**), usually translated as the “Sea of Reeds.” The location of the crossing of the sea will be discussed in the next chapter.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Ex 6-13)

1. Explain Exodus 6:2 (“but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them”) over against the negative critics who claim that this passage proves their theory of “progressive revelation.”
2. Why according to Numbers 3:27f and other passages do we conclude that the genealogy of Moses and Aaron in Exodus 6 is an abbreviated one?
3. From which line of the Levites did Moses and Aaron descend? Who were the sons of Aaron?
4. What did God himself proclaim to be the purpose of the plagues?
5. What significance does the fact have that the LORD used natural phenomena to demonstrate his power? How do negative critics abuse this fact? How does the account of the plagues again and again testify to their miraculous nature?
6. Show from the New Testament how the Passover is clearly a type of Christ.
7. What New Testament application does the celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread have according to 1 Cor 5:7-8? For which festival in our church year is this text the Epistle lesson?
8. Show the relationship between Passover and Lord’s Supper. By analogy compare also the Circumcision - Passover connection with the Baptism - Lord’s Supper connection.
9. Does Ex 12:40 disagree with Gn 15:13 or also with Ga 3:17 as far as Israel’s length of stay in Egypt is concerned? Explain.
10. How many Israelites left Egypt? Who accompanied them? Read Nu 11:4. Where did they help get the Israelites into trouble?
11. What was the great purpose of the LORD’S directive to consecrate every firstborn man or beast? How did the Lord later provide for a substitution of this “consecration of the firstborn”? Confer Nu 3:12-13; 40-47.
12. With which picture did the LORD impress upon his people the importance of observing the Passover? How did the Jews misapply this command?

FOR ADDED CONSIDERATION

The plagues in detail:

1. What symmetrical scheme is formed in the arrangement of the plagues showing order, progression, and completeness?
2. Approximately what time period was covered by all the plagues?
3. How do you explain the power of the Egyptian magicians to duplicate to some extent the effect of the plagues? With which plague did this power cease?
4. With which plague is a distinction recorded between the Egyptians and the Israelites in Goshen?
5. Explain the statement: “All the livestock of the Egyptians died” (Ex 9:6) in the light of Ex 9:20.

6. With which plague does Pharaoh seem to lose his grip entirely? Explain.
7. How do we understand Pharaoh's expression of "repentance"?
8. Explain the sequence of Ex 11:4 in the light of Ex 10:29.
9. What warning is contained for humanity today in the entire plague sequence?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

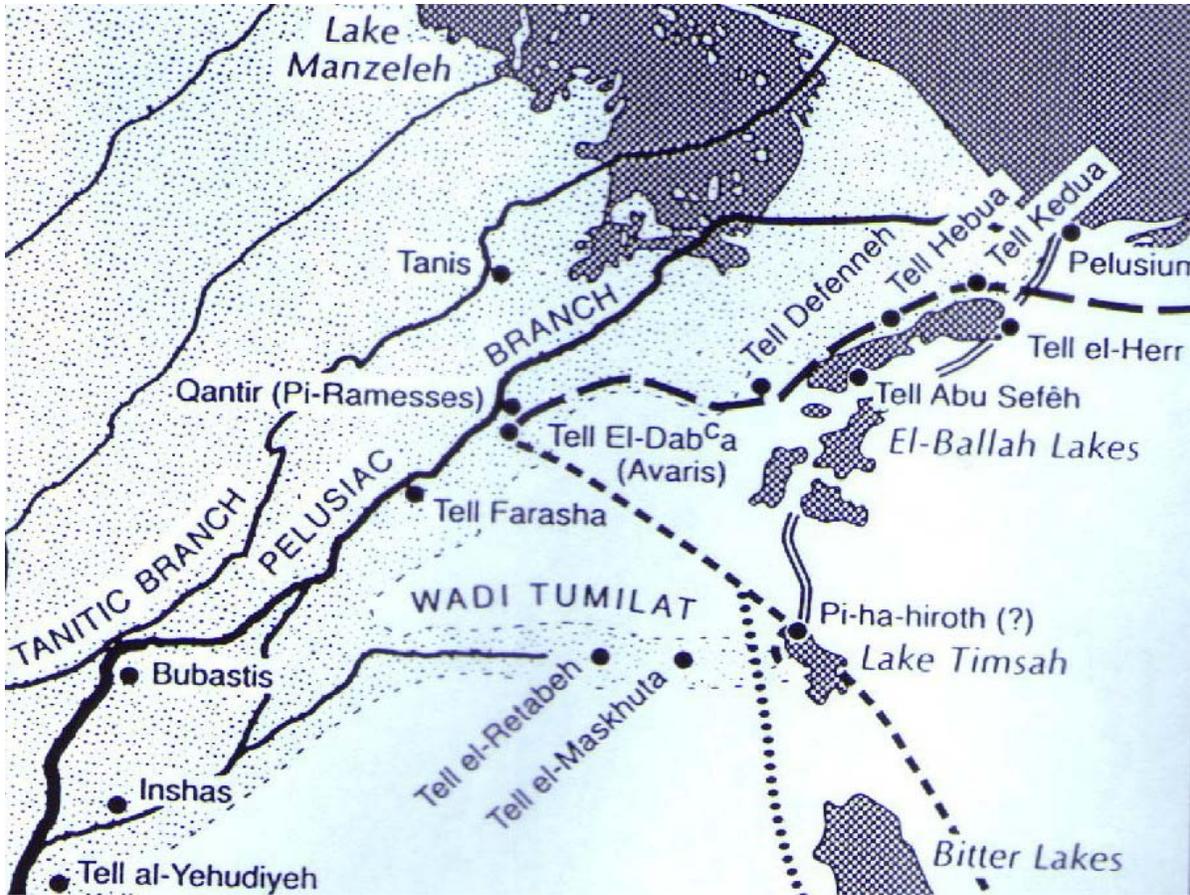
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CHAPTER SIX FROM EGYPT TO SINAI (Ex 14-18)

EXODUS 14

v. 1-4 God led the Israelites on a circuitous way to suggest aimlessness in order to encourage pursuit by Pharaoh and to teach him a lesson. That God hardened Pharaoh's heart is mentioned three times in this chapter in order that "the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen" (v. 18) (see explanation under Ex 4:21).

v. 11 Israel's cry for help when they realized that they were being pursued by Pharaoh's charioteers shows not only a lack of faith, but even bitterness against the leadership of Moses. This is typical of their shallow spiritual perspective, forgetting so quickly all demonstrations of God's protecting care in the present crisis. This is also a warning directed to God's children of all times, who are by nature inclined to do the same thing.

v. 12-18 The words of Moses as well as of the Lord in these verses are an excellent text for times of crisis and emergency. Moses says: "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still" (v. 14). The Lord declares: "Tell the Israelites to move on ..." (v. 15).

v. 21 The crossing of the Red Sea itself has been a subject of much speculation. All sorts of views have been proposed (strong natural wind; ebb tide; volcanic action and tsunami; a shallow and marshy district) in order to diminish the force of God's miraculous intervention. .

The Exodus report tells of God using the natural force of an east wind, but he affected this miraculous event at precisely the right time. How wide a path God prepared by means of this miracle is not indicated; certainly wide enough to provide a considerable passageway. In Psalm 74:13 the Psalmist declares: "It was you who split open the sea by your power." In Psalm 77:19 the writer says of the Lord: "Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen." We don't have to see all of God's "footprints" to believe in his miraculous power.

Psalm 77:17 suggests that a sudden thunderstorm hampered the Egyptian efforts to escape and led to great confusion. Compare Exodus 14:25.

Did Pharaoh himself perish in the Red Sea? Unger, who supports Amenhotep II as the Pharaoh of the Exodus, comments that "the Bible does not state that Pharaoh personally accompanied his horses, his chariots and his horsemen into the water" (*Archaeology and the Old Testament*, p 142), but Psalm 136:15 seem to imply that he did.

What is the *Yam Suf* and where was the crossing? The term traditionally translated Red Sea is, יַם־סוּף, Sea of Reeds or more precisely, Sea of Reed, in Hebrew. Another suggestion is that the term should be read as *Yam Sof*, the End Sea, the equivalent of the Roman "Outer Sea" or "Farthest Sea." This assumes the term יַם־סוּף was misunderstood and mispointed by the Masoretes. The Hebrew word סוּף definitely does mean "reed" but it is possible that it here was a homonym or a similar word that meant something else. If "Sea of Reeds" was intended, we might expect the plural.

The Hebrew term יַם־סוּף denotes, in some biblical references and in most later sources, the sea today

known as the Red Sea, and even to the Indian Ocean and the Persia Gulf, to which it connects. The Red Sea is a large sea, more than 1000 miles long and more than 200 miles wide, separating the Arabian Peninsula from the northeastern corner of Africa (Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia) and forming a northwestern arm off the Indian Ocean. The northern part of the Red Sea splits into two fingers which enclose the Sinai Peninsula, the Gulf of Elat (Aqaba) on the east and the Gulf of Suez on the west. None of these bodies of water are associated with reeds.

The term Red Sea came into the Bible via the Septuagint and Vulgate. Interestingly, Luther did not retain this traditional translation, but translated what he believed was the literal meaning of the Hebrew, Reed Sea. (For a discussion of the history of the term “Red Sea” see *Biblical Archaeological Review*, July/August 1984, p. 57ff).

In the Bible **יָם־סוּף** clearly includes the Gulf of Suez (Nu 33:8) and the Gulf of Aqaba (Nu 21:4, 1 Kg 9:26), and by extension the whole Red Sea. The crossing of the sea was probably at the northern tip of the Gulf of Suez, perhaps in an extension of the sea into the area of the Suez Isthmus today occupied by Lake Timsah or the Bitter Lakes. There is evidence that the level of the sea may have been considerably higher in the 2nd millennium BC. This area was a “sea” in the real sense of the word and not simply a marshy area subject to flooding and drying up by tides.

Some identify the “Red Sea” of the Exodus with one of the lagoons on the south shore of the Mediterranean (Bahr Manzala or the Sirbonic Lake). This theory is especially necessary for those who speculate that the submerging of Pharaoh’s army was the result of a tsunami generated by a volcanic eruption in the Aegean. This theory directly contradicts the biblical account, which states that the Israelites did not take the northern route. Those who place Mount Sinai in Saudi Arabia locate the crossing in the Gulf of Aqaba. There is no credible evidence to support the claims that the actual site of the crossing has been discovered there. Exodus 15:22 says that after crossing the Red Sea the Israelites found themselves in the wilderness of Shur. The wilderness of Shur is east of the Gulf of Suez and in the western area of the Sinai. . To cross the Red Sea and to end up in the wilderness of Shur one could only be crossing the westernmost arm of the Red Sea and not the Gulf of Aqaba. The Exodus account also seems to make it very clear that the crossing site was on the border of Egypt as Israel was entering the desert, not after they had already crossed it.

EXODUS 15

v. 1-21 Moses’ song of praise to God for the miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea is the first biblical psalm.

The song consists of three stanzas (The Lord is a Warrior, v 2-5; You Will Lead the People, v 6-10; Nations Will Tremble, v 11-18), followed by Miriam’s refrain (v. 21). Each begins with words of praise to the LORD, and ends with a description of Pharaoh’s destruction. The third strophe prophetically sings of the establishment of Israel as God’s kingdom in the promised inheritance. Negative critics, of course, have tried to place its composition at a much later time in Israel’s history.

v. 22-26 The experience at **Marah**, where the bitter water was miraculously made sweet, is again descriptive of Israel’s reaction to difficulty at so many occasions.

The location of all of these sites on map is by conjecture based on distance apart and the presence of water. We will discuss the sites in Sinai in connection with the itinerary in Numbers 33.

v. 27 **Elim**’s oasis is identified with a site that was frequently used by caravans traveling through this

desert area.

One has to see personally the arid nature of this desert region to appreciate how dependent Israel was upon the LORD for support on this journey. They had now passed from a state of abject slavery in Egypt to one of complete dependence on God for support. Unfortunately they often failed to measure up to the test, as their reaction to various difficulties on the way indicates.

EXODUS 16

After they reach **the Desert of Sin** in v. 7 Moses and Aaron say to the Israelites: “You will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him.” Sin is a geographic term not related to the English word “sin.”

At this occasion the Lord revealed his glory (כְּבוֹד יְהוָה) in providing food, an act of providence that was to continue forty years (v. 35).

In the morning when the manna miraculously covered the ground like a layer of dew, the Israelites asked מִן הַיּוֹא (‘‘What is this?’’ Archaic for מַה־הַיּוֹא). In Hebrew the manna was called *man*. The English ‘‘manna’’ comes via the Greek (μάννα). An omer of manna (2 lbs.) per head per day was supplied.

At the same time provisions were given so as not to waste this food or hoard it. Moreover, God bestowed his gift in such a way that the Sabbath was sanctified by it. This shows us that a weekly Sabbath regulation was observed even before the Sinaitic law of the Sabbath, unless the reference and the incidence of disobedience are prospective.

Note, finally, the provision for keeping of a bowl of manna ‘‘in front of the Testimony’’ (v. 34).

According to John 6:31-58 manna is a type of Christ, the true ‘‘Bread of Life,’’ although it should be noted that Jesus comments more on the differences between himself and the manna than on the similarities.

In the evening quail came and covered the camp. The Red Sea is on a major path of bird migrations.

EXODUS 17

v. 1-7 ‘‘They camped at **Rephidim**.’’ Here follows the incident of Moses striking a rock to obtain water (See He 3:8, ‘‘time of testing’’; also Ps 95). The application of Scripture itself: ‘‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, etc.’’

1 Cor 10:4 uses this Rock at Rephidim as a type of Christ, who supplies us with living water (Jn 4:14; 6:35; 7:37).

v. 8-13 ‘‘The Amelekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim.’’ These were, at least in part, descendants of Esau (Gn 36:12), the first to threaten Israel. Here for the first time we hear of Joshua (הוֹשֵׁעַ - ‘‘He Saves’’ later יְהוֹשֻׁעַ - ‘‘Yahweh Saves’’), a leader of the tribe of Ephraim. As Joshua led the army, Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses. The holding up of hands is regarded as the sign or attitude of prayer and benediction, and this text is often used as an example of the power of incessant prayer, through which we receive strength for victory over our enemies. Edersheim interprets this passage as describing Moses holding up his staff as ‘‘the banner of God.’’

v. 14-16 The Lord instructs Moses to write the account of this victory “on a scroll” (בְּסֵפֶר). This is the first mention of writing as related to official Hebrew records. The record was most likely a papyrus scroll.

For the LORD’S threat upon the Amelekites see Dt 25:17-18. This threat recorded on the scroll was to be carried out by Saul, but he disobeyed.

EXODUS 18

This chapter relates how Moses was reunited with his wife Zipporah and his two sons Gershom and Eliezer, who had apparently spent the time of Moses’ conflict at Pharaoh’s court with Jethro. The fact that Jethro here offers sacrifices to God (v. 12) indicates his belief in the true God.

Jethro here offers good advice to Moses (v. 13-27). Instead of judging all civil cases himself -- as Moses seems to have been doing -- Jethro suggests that Moses teach the people “decrees and laws” (v. 20) and delegate the authority to serve as judges to “capable men.” Moses followed this advice (see Dt 1:12-18). Perhaps the implementation of the plan is not strictly chronological. Pastors today should be advised to make use of capable laymen rather than to attempt doing everything themselves.

With this chapter we conclude the first portion of Exodus, “The Deliverance of the Covenant People out of Egypt,” and prepare ourselves for “The Establishing of the Covenant with Israel.”

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Ex 14-18)

1. By what means did the Lord led his people on their journey? What added assurance was given by this method of guidance? What practical assistance?
2. In what unusual direction did the Lord lead Israel? Why?
3. What varying views are held concerning the “Red Sea”?
4. What practical applications do you see in the story of Israel Crossing the Red Sea?
5. Which words in the Song of Moses describe the LORD’S awesome power? The LORD’S faithfulness to his promise?
6. Describe what happened at Marah; at Elim. Which attributes of God do both stories manifest?
7. What happened in the Desert of Sin? Which unusual expression occurs for the first time in connection with this miracle? For which Sinaitic regulation does the Lord provide in advance in connection with this miracle?
8. What lesson does the incident at Rephidim teach? (see Ps 95 and He 3:8)
9. Who attacked Israel at Rephidim? How did this people originate (confer Gn 36:12)? How were they defeated? What stern judgment was pronounced against them (confer Dt 25:17-18)?
10. What good advice did Jethro give Moses? How can this same principle of leadership be applied to God’s chosen servants today?

FOR ADDED CONSIDERATION

Read the excellent article by Prof. August Pieper “The Glory of the Lord,” reprinted from *WLQ* in *The Wauwatosa Theology*, Vol. 2, p. 417-498.

Trace Israel’s journey from Rameses to Sinai on a map.

CHAPTER SEVEN THE SINAITIC LAW (Ex 19-24)

PART II THE ESTABLISHING OF THE COVENANT WITH ISRAEL (Ch 19-24)

EXODUS 19

As Israel approaches Mount Sinai, the time has come for God's covenant with his people to be established. This arrival occurs in the third month after the exodus. Israel remains here at Sinai 11 months until the departure recorded in Nu 10:11f.

As soon as the people are encamped opposite the mountain, Moses goes "up to God" (v. 3) to receive God's instructions. Moses is first of all to remind the people of these words: "I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (v. 4; For Moses' own explanation of this picture see Dt 32:10-12).

1. This is God's preamble and historical prologue to his treaty with his people. The eagle watches over its young carefully. When the eaglet leaves the nest, the mother flies protectingly beneath it, lest it should fall upon the rocks below. Even so God chose Israel's route (13:7), was their guide (13:21), their defender (14:19), their provider (15:25; 16:13), their ally (17) and their counselor. All this God did in spite of Israel's fearful, thankless, dissatisfied, disobedient, and rebellious attitude. Patiently the Lord trained his people to trust in him in every need and to obey him. He brought them to himself.
2. God then states the general principles of his treaty: "If you obey me fully and obey my covenant ..." (5a). Out of thankfulness for the Lord's redeeming love and protecting care they were to obey him as an expression of their love and thankfulness. The basic principle was true grace from a God of redemption. Nevertheless, the condition of obedience to the covenant laws accompanied these principles: "If you obey me ..." This conditional aspect of the Sinaitic covenant will be explained later.
3. The blessings of this treaty would follow: "Out of all nations you will be my treasured possession ... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (5b and 6). Israel was to be a people set apart, a kingdom the citizens of which were priests, "the vehicle of the knowledge and salvation of God to the nations of the earth" (KD Commentary, p 98). It was to be also a holy nation, holy by virtue of the forgiveness of sins received as the gift of God's covenant of grace. (In the NT this becomes a description of the spiritual Israel, its blessings and responsibilities. Confer 1 Pe 2:9f).

This covenant introduced here governs all the solemn events at Sinai, culminating in the confirmation of the covenant recorded in Exodus 24. (At the close of Ex 24 there will be a more extensive presentation of the nature and purpose of the Sinaitic Law.)

The next verses contain regulations of the people's preparation (washing; limits around the mountain, etc.) and the Lord's descent upon Mount Sinai amidst thunder and lightning, trumpet blasts, smoke, earthquake and thick cloud (v. 7-25). In what more dramatic way could the LORD have impressed upon Israel the awesome importance of this moment in their history! (See also the description of Mt. Sinai in Hb 12:18-21.)

EXODUS 20

v. 1-17 “And God spoke all these words:” (כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה). The Decalogue is called “these words” in distinction to the “laws” (הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים) which follow in Exodus 21, which applied to specific problems and conditions in Israel. The two together form the “Book of the Covenant” (Ex 24:3 and 7).

Note the words, “I am the Lord your God” ... with which the “Words” are introduced! This is the “I AM” God, the LORD. God uses these introductory words to impress upon us that he loves us, that he is our Maker, and above all our Redeemer and Savior.

The ten “words” were spoken by God directly to the people (Ex 20:19). They were also written by God on two tables of stone (Ex 31:18). The number of the “Words” is not mentioned here. The number ten comes from Ex 34:28, Dt 4:13, and Dt 10:4. The specific numbering and arrangement is not indicated. Jews count v. 2 as Word I, v. 3-6 as II, and v. 17 as X. Greek Orthodox and Reformed churches count v. 3 as I, v. 4-6 as II, and v. 17 as X. Roman and Lutheran churches count v. 3-6 as I, v. 17 as IX and X. Our division into two tables is based on Mt 22:37-39.

The explanation of the Ten Commandments is treated in catechetics and is therefore not dealt with in detail here. For a brief exegesis of the Ten Commandments on the basis of the Hebrew text, see J. Brug *WLQ*, Summer 2005, p. 185-209.

v. 18-21 Out of fear the people drew back, but Moses and Aaron (cf. 19:24) drew near to receive the Lord’s further commands.

v. 22-26 From the Ten Commandments the next precepts turn to the general form of divine worship in Israel.

The LORD made clear that he could not be represented by images made out of earthly material. He wanted only an altar, an elevation built up of earth or rough stones, for the purpose of bringing sacrifices. We note how men like Samuel, Gideon, and Elijah later on followed this principle. This principle did not apply to the tabernacle, where God himself gave other directives for worship.

The passage: “*Wherever* I cause my name to be honored, I will come and bless you” (v. 24) is said by the source critics to be in conflict with Dt 12:10-11, which provides for one centralized place of worship. Actually it does nothing of the sort. God simply says here -- in view of Israel’s further wanderings -- that not only here at Sinai, but at every place which the Lord would subsequently designate he would come to his people and bless them.

The Mosaic Law Code sets forth a summary of the immutable holy will of God in the Ten Commandments, which were embedded within this code as its basic core. The wording as formulated through Moses is not in its entirety applicable to the NT church. This is seen particularly in the words of the Third Commandment, relating to the Old Testament Sabbath as a shadow of Christ, and in the promise of the Fourth Commandment, which relates to the life in the land of Canaan.

EXODUS 21, 22, 23

“These are the laws you are to set before them”: הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים, “the judgments,” are applications of the Lord’s moral commandments to the special conditions of Israel, the rights and the judicial arrangements on which national life and society in Israel were based. The fundamental principles for regulating society were enunciated by means of specific cases (case-law) or precedents, as in many other law collections of

the time.

In general, these judgments apply to the Israelites' social positions relative to each other (21:1-23: 12) and to the Israelites' religious position relative to the Lord (23:13-19). In a theocratic form of government this mixture of civil-religious laws was appropriate. The ceremonial law of Israel sometimes went beyond the requirements of moral law. On the other hand, the civil law of Israel does not fully incorporate all of the moral law.

At the close (23:20-33) are assurances from the Lord that his Angel -- a manifestation of the LORD himself -- would guide and protect them. The Lord also foretells Israel's future conquest of Canaan and warns against alliances with strange people and their gods.

Some of the specific topics covered by these regulations are conditions of servitude (21:1-11); manslaughter and bodily injury (21:12-36); protection of property (22:1-14); social responsibility (22:16-31); laws of justice and mercy (23:1-9), and finally the Sabbath and the three annual festivals (23:10-19).

Similarity to Other Ancient Law Codes

The famous law-code of Hammurabi, discovered in 1901 on a seven-foot stele in the acropolis of Susa by Jacques de Morgan, contains 300 paragraphs of similar laws of the Babylonians dating to ca. 1700 BC, antedating Moses by 300 years. This discovery refuted the Wellhausenian claim that sophisticated law codes of this kind could not have existed at Moses' time. At the same time, it led to the claim that the laws of Moses were copied from Mesopotamian Codes.

Subsequently similar law codes have been found going back to an even earlier time period. Among the laws compared with biblical laws are Sumerian Laws, the laws of Urukagina 2300 BC, Laws of Urnammu 2112-2095 BC, Laws of the Kingdom of Eshnunna 2300 BC-2000 BC, Lipit-Ishtar 1850 BC, Hammurabi 18th Century BC, and the Edict of Amisaduqa 17th Century BC. Those trying to place the laws of Moses into the 1st millennium BC make comparisons to latter Hittite and Assyrian Laws.

While the Hammurabi code and other ancient codes contain similarities with the Mosaic code, these have often been exaggerated. The differences are apparent in the way biblical law repeatedly stresses divine origin and authority rather than kingly authority. Significant differences are also apparent in the tone of the laws, their arrangement, and cultural background.

Similarities are due to the natural knowledge of the Law shared by all people, to the fact that there are only so many crimes and punishments, to the various codes coming from the same cultural sphere, to the common heritage of Israel and Mesopotamia, and to translators familiar with the wording of the Bible producing similarities.

Key differences are that property crimes are punished more severely in Mesopotamia, in Mesopotamia intent is less important; class distinctions are more severe, there is less social compassion; and there is no spiritual motivation. In the other codes there are divinely appointed kings who make laws, rather than laws given directly by God. The other codes are civil law, not moral law. The key difference is the difference between laws reflecting the standards of unholy gods and a law reflecting the standards of the Holy God.

Miscellaneous laws

Various forms of slavery or servitude were common in all countries of the ancient Near East (21:1-6), and they are regulated in the laws of those lands.

The Mosaic law presupposes the existence of polygamy (21:10), but the Old Testament does not sanction it.

The law of retaliation (*lex talionis*), “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (21:25) has often been cited as “typical of harsh Old Testament laws.” This was restricted, however, to matters of bodily harm and intended to check passionate vengeance which could result in death. It expressed the basic principle that “the punishment is proportionate to the crime.”

Discussion of Ex 21:22-25 has intensified because of the current debate over abortion. Was the offender punished only if harm was done to the mother or also if harm was done to the unborn child? The main reading of the NIV imposes the *lex talionis* whether the harm is done to mother or child. The NIV footnote allows that this retribution is applied only for harm to the mother. Since the Hebrew verb used here refers to birth not miscarriage, it seems the first explanation is correct.

The regulation concerning sorcery (22:18) was misapplied in the 17th century witchcraft trials in New England. We must remember that the church in the Old Testament was a civil authority, and that witchcraft in those countries was malignant and often death-dealing (compare modern Africa).

Provisions were made for the Sabbath Year, which is more fully defined in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and also for the Sabbath Day. The humane aspect of this ordinance is emphasized (23:10-13). The three pilgrim feasts were to maintain national, spiritual, and social unity. They were:

- a. Feast of Unleavened Bread (connected with the Passover (23:15).
- b. Feast of Reaping (NT Pentecost), also called the Feast of Weeks in Leviticus and Deuteronomy (23:16).
- c. Feast of Ingathering, also called the Feast of Tabernacles in Leviticus and Deuteronomy (23:16).

These feasts will be considered in more detail in the later studies of Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

“Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk” (23:19, Ex 34:26; Dt 14:21) seems to be an incongruous addition here. It has been much debated whether its purpose is to forbid a custom prominent in pagan worship or whether the aim is more “humanitarian” (see similar laws in Lv 22:28, Dt 22:6,7; Lv 22:27, Ex 22:29). A third view is that the verse means that a kid should not be cooked before it has been weaned. It has been widely repeated that reference to such a heathen custom has been found in a text from Ugarit, but the text in question was *reconstructed* to read “cook a kid in milk,” largely by prompting from the biblical text. Even when reconstructed the text said nothing about a mother’s milk. It now appears that it also says nothing about cooking or a kid, but that it refers to coriander, not a kid. This is a good example of a translator-induced similarity.

These laws also anticipated future situations, as the laws immediately following also show, since they related to Israel’s future travel and conquest.

“I will send the hornet ahead of you.” This rather cryptic statement appears in reference to Israel’s conquest of Canaan under divine leadership and warning against heathen idolatry and alliances with other nations. There are various interpretations of the hornet: Egyptian attacks on Canaan; the sting of fear, sickness, natural disasters, etc.

With Exodus 23 the Book of the Covenant was complete. It was written down by Moses on a scroll, to be read to all the people, and formally ratified as the next chapter relates.

Criminal Law

Perhaps here is the place to digress briefly about Israel's criminal law. The main texts are Ex 21:12-27; Dt 17:10-13; Dt 19; Dt 21:1-9; and Dt 25:1-3.

The main purposes of the law were to purge evil, to deter crime, and to compensate victims (Dt 19:19-20).

The main principle of punishment was proportionate punishment (*lex talionis*. Ex 21:23-24). The society had a responsibility to bring criminals to justice (Dt 21:1-9). Responsibility for prosecution lay with the family not with the state. Compensation was to the victim not to the state. The offender is restored if possible (Dt 25:1-3). If not, he was removed by execution.

The main punishments were:

- 1) Death for premeditated murder, kidnapping, defiant disobedience of parents, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, false prophecy, profaning Sabbath, blasphemy, idolatry, magic, and divination (crimes that disrupted the basic orders of society).
- 2) "Cutting off" = execution? Excommunication? or divine justice?
- 3) Restitution and penalty (20% or double) or *lex talionis*
- 4) Exile in the city of refuge for negligent homicide
- 5) Beating (Dt 25:1-3)
- 6) Imprisonment was generally not used except for political crimes.

EXODUS 24

v. 1,2 These two verses are actually the conclusion of the Lord's words from the preceding chapter. God gives Moses special directions in regard to the ratification of the covenant.

Nadab and Abihu (v. 1) were the two oldest sons of Aaron (6:23). Their sin of offering "unauthorized fire" (Lv 10:1-2) prevented their succession in the priesthood.

v. 3-11 The Ratification of the Covenant. Moses first of all recited the words of the covenant to the people. The people assented to it. Then Moses wrote all the words of the LORD in the Book of the Covenant.

The next day Moses erected an altar and 12 pillars representing the 12 tribes. Burnt offerings and fellowship offerings were brought to the Lord. Blood was sprinkled both on the altar and on the people, signifying the two parties involved.

Having been consecrated with the blood of the covenant, 70 elders representing the Israelites were qualified to ascend the mountain. There they "saw the God of Israel" (v. 10), receiving a *visio Dei* in the form described. God revealed himself not as a consuming fire, but as a gracious God communing with his people. They saw God, and they ate and drank in a covenant meal.

Edersheim calls this entire ceremony “the most important in the whole history of Israel. By this one sacrifice, never renewed, Israel was formally set apart as the people of God; and it lay at the foundation of all the sacrificial worship which followed” (*Bible History*, Vol. 2, p. 120).

v. 12-18 Moses, at God’s command, ascends the mountain, where the glory of the Lord (כְּבוֹד יְהוָה) envelopes the summit. Here he is to remain 40 days and 40 nights and is to receive the law on tablets of stone.

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This concludes the second chief part of Exodus, “The Establishing of the Covenant with Israel,” and prepares us for the next section, “The Entry into the Place of the Covenant” (Chapters 25-40).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Ex 19-24)

1. Apply the LORD’s picture in Ex 19:4 to Israel (see Dt 32:10-12).
2. Which basic principles does the Lord express in his preamble to the Sinaitic covenant (Ex 19:5-6)? How does this differ from the Abrahamic covenant?
3. Of which New Testament passage does the theme of the Sinaitic covenant remind us? What difference, however, existed in the case of God’s people in Old Testament times (confer Ga 4:1-7)?
4. With which words does the LORD introduce the Sinaitic Covenant? In what spirit was Israel therefore to observe God’s laws?
5. Which two chief parts comprise the core of the Sinaitic covenant? Give their place in Scripture. Distinguish between them.
6. What do the following passages tell us about הַדְּבָרִים: Ex 20:1; 32:15-16; 34:28.
7. Discuss the division into Ten Commandments, into Two Tables.
8. How do negative critics interpret Ex 20:24 in its distinction from the central place of worship commanded in Dt 12:10-11? How do we explain this passage?
9. What provisions were made in הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים for:
 - a. dealing with Hebrew servants;
 - b. polygamy;
 - c. unintentional killing;
 - d. personal injury
 - e. sorcery;
 - f. money lending.
10. How would you explain the fact that these laws seem to make exceptions from principles expressed in the moral law?
11. Which three important communal festivals were established at this time?
12. With which unusual laws are the *Mishpatim* brought to a close? Explain. (See also Ex 34:26 and Dt

14:12).

13. In what respect does the discovery of the Code of Hammurabi support Mosaic authority of the Pentateuch? What differences, however, exist between these codes?
14. Describe in detail the steps taken to ratify the Sinaitic covenant. Why is Ex 24:1-11 a fitting Maundy Thursday text?

CHAPTER EIGHT AN ANALYSIS OF THE SINAITIC OR MOSAIC LAW

The Sinai story not only tells us of the giving of a law code, but this law is called a covenant. The whole set of laws, including the ceremonial laws, is designated as a covenant. The Ten Commandments as such, written on two tables of stone, are called the tables of the covenant, Dt 4:13; 9:9. Israel broke this covenant when the Law was broken. In the daily sacrifices of Israel and in the rites of the Day of Atonement the Lord, however, provided for a constant expiation of these sins so that the covenant might stay in effect. When Israel broke the Law not merely in weakness but in open defiance, the Lord sent judgments, and Israel was led into captivity.

The Nature and Purpose of the Sinaitic or Mosaic Law

1. It was neither an eternal covenant nor an unconditional covenant. It was a bilateral covenant involving reciprocal obligations between God and his chosen people. Deliberate disobedience would break the covenant and lead to judgment.
2. It did not annul or replace the earlier covenant of grace entered into by God with Abraham and his seed more than four centuries before (Ga 3:17).

The Abrahamic covenant was all promise and nothing but promise (pure grace). The day on which Israel left Egypt was the great turning point in its history. It was the day of the initial fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Abraham (see Gn 15:14-18). Note that in Exodus 3:6-7 God reveals himself to Moses as the covenant God, speaking of "my people." In Exodus 6:4-8 God says: "I have remembered my covenant." At the start of the Decalogue he reminds them that he is the LORD who brought them out of Egypt, as he had promised.

We must not lose sight of this Abrahamic covenant. It is the great antecedent of the Sinaitic covenant. Without the Abrahamic covenant the religion of the Old Testament would indeed have been an essentially different religion from that of the New Testament. We can gain a correct understanding of the Sinaitic covenant only in the light of the Abrahamic covenant. Moses was made aware of this, when he was forcefully reminded that since he was to be the mediator of the Sinaitic covenant, he and his family should bear the sign of the Abrahamic covenant (circumcision) (Exodus 4:24-28). God himself promised never to forget the Abrahamic covenant (Lv 26:40ff). When Israel walked contrary to him, he would walk contrary to Israel and bring them into the land of their enemies, but then God would remember his covenant with Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant was exclusively a gospel covenant, a covenant of an unconditional gospel, an everlasting covenant. Hence it was the refuge of the Israelite whenever he realized that he could not keep the Sinaitic covenant.

3. The covenant of the Law, the Sinaitic covenant, was a necessary discipline for God's Old Testament people (Ga 4:1-3).

During the Old Testament, God closely regulated the religious and civil life of his chosen people Israel by laws and ordinances. Paul explains the meaning of this arrangement in Ga 4:1-3 and in Ga 3:19-24. It was like a time of childhood for God's people in which the father provides more rules and guidance for his children. When they are adults, more is left free for them. These outward rules and regulations were set aside by Christ's first coming. They had then outlived their usefulness.

While it was in force, the law of Israel served a five-fold purpose. Three of those purposes were the

same as those served by the moral law today.

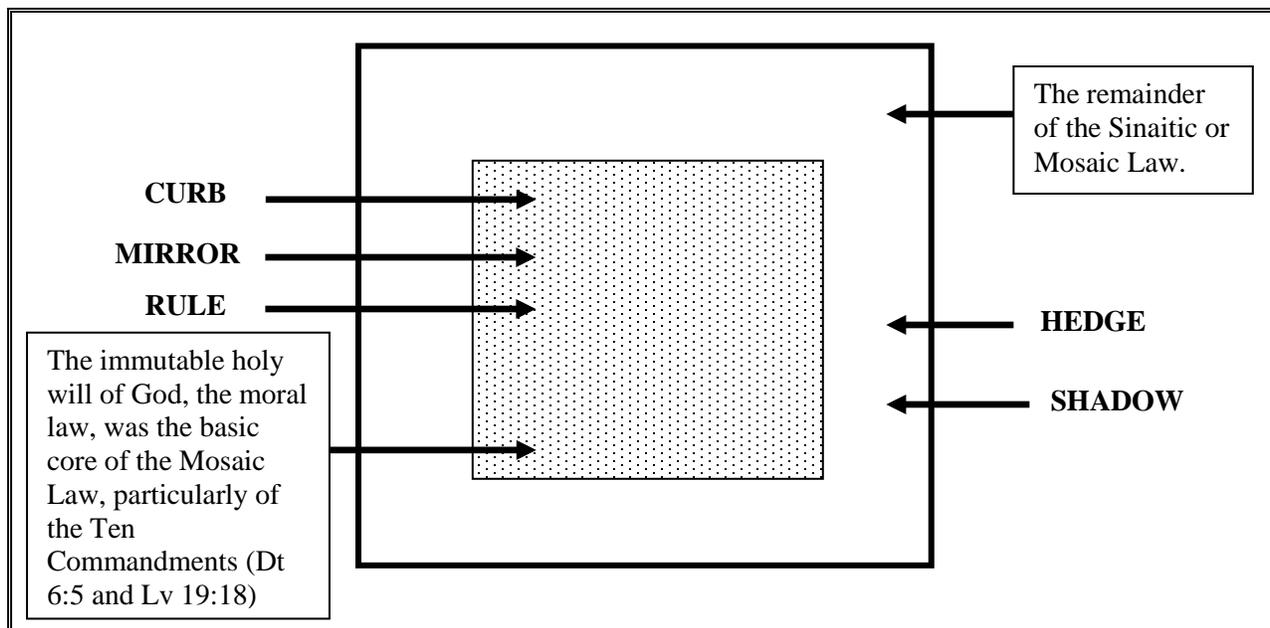
- a. The law was a mirror: it showed God's people their continued sinfulness
- b. The law was a curb: it restrains outbursts of sin with its threats.
- c. The law was a rule: it guided believers by informing them of what conduct pleased God.
- d. The law served as a hedge which kept Israel separate from the Gentiles and from losing the promise by losing their identity.
- e. It foreshadowed the blessings of Christ by some of its provisions.

The first three uses were primarily functions of the moral law (though the threats attached to civil law also served as a curb, and violations of some ceremonial laws were also civil crimes). The last two functions were primarily functions of the ceremonial law (though adherence to moral law would also distinguish Israel from heathen nations).

Hedged in by many and various ordinances of the Law (such as the Sabbath and circumcision and dietary restrictions) the Israelites were to be a holy nation, i.e., a people set apart and kept apart from the idolatry and wickedness surrounding it and thus better fitted to keep intact and to carry forward the worship of the LORD and the gospel until the coming of the Seed. As a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, Israel was to carry forward through the ages amidst the idolatry of a pagan world the worship of the true God and his gospel of salvation and to become the cradle of him who is the salvation of mankind. Through Israel God intended to fulfill his promises of a Redeemer for all people, given in Paradise and conferred through Noah to Shem. To fulfill this purpose he called Israel into being from the seed of Abraham, the chosen son of Shem. The promise passed through Isaac, Jacob, and Judah to David, the royal father of the King of Kings.

In the sacrificial code and particularly in the ritual of the Day of Atonement Israel had a preview of the manner in which the Savior would carry out his work of redemption. When the reality came, this shadow became unnecessary (see Col 2:16ff and He 10:1).

For Israel as for us, the most important purpose of the law in the economy of salvation is as a mirror which shows us our sin. By the law is the knowledge of sin (Ro 3:20). The law entered that offense might abound (Ro 5:20). The law works wrath (Ro 4:15). By the law God concluded all under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe (Ga 3:22). The waywardness of the people which manifested itself at the outset in Egypt and throughout the journey to Sinai, and of which we hear more and more in the Pentateuch and thereafter, required a discipline which would make the people realize their sins and the futility of all their own endeavors. When they had thus learned to despair of their own righteousness, the discipline of the law would make them realize the need and attractiveness of the Abrahamic covenant of pure grace which they had possessed of old.



1. The large square pictured above contains the “613 precepts” of the Sinaitic law code, including civil and ceremonial law.
2. The small square contains the immutable will of God, the moral law, as set forth particularly in the Ten Commandments as the core of the Sinaitic code.
3. The Law as shadow applies only to the ceremonial law. The moral law does not foreshadow Christ or preach the gospel.
4. The Law as hedge applies primarily to the ceremonial law. Obedience of all parts of the law tended to distinguish Israel from Gentiles, but the “better Gentiles” observed much of the moral law.
5. The threat of punishment, which curbed sin, was attached to all parts of the law.

The “Abrogation” of the Mosaic Law

1. The Mosaic Code was given to one people and was intended to be temporary until the Seed would come. It never was a code for non-Jews, as the Jews themselves have always recognized. This code does not serve as a code for Christians, the spiritual Israel (Ac 15:5, 10; Eph 2:14-15; Col 2:16-17; Ga 5:2).
2. The law as the immutable will of God (moral law) is the law which God in the very act of creation inscribed into the hearts of all people. This knowledge of the will of God has been partially obscured in the human heart as a consequence of sin. It has, however, been revealed again in the Scriptures. This immutable will of God has not been set aside by Christ’s first coming.
3. The form of the Ten Commandments, though primarily moral law, incorporates elements of ceremonial law (the Sabbath) and of earthly blessing (enjoyment of the land) which do not apply to New Testament Christians. Civil, ceremonial, and moral elements are intertwined in the Sinaitic Code.
4. The ceremonial laws of Israel and the civil penalties of Israel’s law are not mandatory for other nations. This is demonstrated by God’s words (Col 2:16-17, Hebrews) and by his actions (tearing of the Temple veil, the destruction of the Temple and the nation).
5. The moral law as affirmed in the New Testament is binding on all people. The New Testament, however, does not give us a new code.

“How Christians Should Regard Moses,” *Luther’s Works, Word and Sacrament I*, Vol. 35, p. 157-174.

“Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images and Sacraments,” *Luther’s Works, Church and Ministry II*, Vol. 40, p. 79-223.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (ANALYSIS OF MOSAIC LAW)

1. Look up the Hebrew בְּרִית and the Greek διαθήκη in lexicons. Give a summary definition of these terms.
2. Which forms of law does the Sinaitic or Mosaic Law include?
3. By what means did the Lord provide expiation for those who broke this Law?
4. What is the basic difference between the Sinaitic and the Abrahamic covenants? How did the LORD make Moses aware that the Abrahamic covenant came first?
5. How do we summarize the threefold purpose of the moral law and the five-fold purpose of the Sinaitic Law?
6. What additional purposes, therefore, did the Sinaitic Law serve beyond those of the moral law? For whom? For how long? What picture does Paul use in Galatians 3:19-24 and 4:1-3 to emphasize this fact?
7. Can we identify the wording of the Ten Commandments with the immutable will of God? Explain.

8. How did Jesus summarize the Ten Commandments? Where do we find this same summary in the Pentateuch?
9. Explain what we mean when we say that the Mosaic Code was abrogated?
10. Give a Bible passage to show that there is perfect fulfillment of the law of God (his immutable will) only in Christ.

CHAPTER NINE THE TABERNACLE AND PRIESTLY GARMENTS (Ex 25-31)

EXODUS PART III THE ENTRY INTO THE PLACE OF THE COVENANT (Ch. 25-40)

EXODUS 25

To give a definite external form to the covenant that he had concluded with his people and to construct a visible bond of fellowship through which he might reveal himself to the people that they might draw near to him as their God, the LORD told Moses that the Israelites were to erect a sanctuary for him, so that he could dwell in the midst of them (25:8). The construction and arrangement of this sanctuary were determined in all respects by God himself.

God himself showed Moses a pattern of the tabernacle on Mt. Sinai (cf. He 8:5), but its features, like those of the later Temple, make use of materials and styles familiar to the contemporary culture. Close parallels to the construction techniques of the Tabernacle are found in contemporary items from Egypt from the tomb of King Tut.

Wellhausen's theory, that the tabernacle concept found its origin in late Arabic sources and was no more than the work of a post-exilic compiler, is hardly worthy of serious thought or in need of refutation, especially in the light of discoveries which contradict his arguments.

v. 1-9 The materials for the tabernacle were derived from the free-will offerings of Israel. The word "offering" in v. 2 is a "lift-offering." The Hebrew word תְּרוּמָה is from רוּם, "raise high," and designates a gift that was lifted up by the priest and thus dedicated to God for his use. Here it may have a more general connotation.

The NIV correctly translates "bronze" instead of "brass" (KJV) in v. 3. The alloy brass was unknown at that time. The metal of choice was bronze, an alloy of copper and tin.

"Hides of sea cows" (תְּחָשִׁים) rather than the "badger skin" of older translations. The translation "badger skin" seems to have come from Luther's rendering "*Dachs*." Another suggestion is "porpoise skins."

Blue, purple, and scarlet dye were very expensive. Blue and purple shades were derived from murex (mollusk) shells. Scarlet/orange shades were derived from the eggs and carcasses of a type of worm. Fine linen is so expertly woven from flax that it can hardly be distinguished from silk.

"Acacia" is the modern replacement for the transliteration, "*shittim*." Acacia is a hard wood common in the Sinai wilderness.

v. 10-22 The Ark of the Covenant (אָרוֹן בְּרִית־יְהוָה / אֶת הָעֵדֻת)

אָרוֹן is not the term for Noah's ark but the term for a chest or coffin. It was a rectangular chest of acacia

wood overlaid with gold. Around the base ran a gold molding, below which at each corner were fixed gold rings. Through these rings were slipped gold plated poles for purposes of carrying the ark. The cover is referred to as כַּפֹּרֶת (Greek *ἱλαστήριον*; Latin *propitiatorium*), “an atoning covering,” also called the “mercy seat.” Mounted upon this gold slab cover were the figures of two cherubim made out of beaten gold. These figures faced each other with spread wings, as though shadowing the mercy seat. The forms of the cherubim are uncertain. In Ezekiel 1 they are part human and part animal in appearance. Into this ark Moses was to put “the testimony” (הַעֲדוּת), the name given to the two tables of stone (v. 17).

The ark of the covenant together with the *capporeth* became the throne of the LORD in the midst of his chosen people. It became a throne of grace on the Day of Atonement, when through the sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat by the High Priest the LORD granted reconciliation to his people for all their transgressions.

The ark was 2 cubits long x 1 cubit high x 1 cubit wide. 1 cubit = 18-20 inches (some say it may have been as much as 25 inches).

v. 23-30 The Table of Showbread, or The Table of the Bread of the Presence (הַשֻּׁלְחָן לֶחֶם פָּנִים)

A table (שֻּׁלְחָן) was made out of the same materials and also fitted with rings and staves for carrying purposes. Vessels of gold (plates for bread and pitchers and bowls for pouring out drink offerings) were to be placed upon it.

Instead of “showbread” (KJV) the NIV translates “bread of the Presence” (v. 30), since bread was to lie upon this table “in the presence of the LORD (לֶחֶם פָּנִים - lit. “bread of the face”). The bread was a constant thank-offering for the Lord’s daily blessings.

v. 31-40 The Lampstand (Golden Candlestick - מְנֹרֶת זָהָב טְהוֹר) consisted of a central shaft with three branches on each side. On the shaft and branches were cups shaped like almond flowers, three on each branch and four on the shaft, for ornamental purposes. On top of each branch and shaft were set oil lamps. This was the only light furnished in the Tabernacle.

The weight of this lampstand (מְנֹרֶה) was 60 kilos or 132 lbs., made of pure gold!

The symbolism of light points to Christ, the true Light (Jn 1:6-9; 8:12). The form of the Menorah was widely used as a representation of the Tree of Life, though this symbolism is not mentioned in Exodus.

The Altar of Incense is described in Exodus 30.

EXODUS 26

v. 1-30 The Tabernacle or the Tent (מִשְׁכָּן = the dwelling, from שָׁכַן dwell. Also called, מִקְדָּשׁ,

“sanctuary,” and אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד, tent of meeting).

The dimensions of the tabernacle as a whole were 30 cubits long x 10 cubits wide x 10 cubits high. The Holy Place was 20 x 10 x 10. The Holy of Holies was a cube 10 cubits on a side. This was a very small building since it was not a church for worshipers, but a sanctuary in which priests worked. It corresponds to our chancel.

The inner covering of the tent was linen curtains (described in v. 1-6). The three successive outer coverings were made of goat hair, ram skins dyed red, and hides of sea cows (v. 7-13).

A wooden framework supported the curtains (v. 15-30). It is not agreed whether this was made of solid planks or rectangular frames. The latter seems most likely. The frames were bound together by crossbars to give stability to the structure. Most models show the tabernacle with a flat roof, but some show a pitched roof, with the curtains not reaching the ground. In the rainy season in Israel some type of pitch would be a necessity.

Bible students today differ in their understanding of many of the features of the Tabernacle. Obviously Moses knew what was meant (Ex 25:9; He 9:5).

v. 31-35 A curtain separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, where the ark rested. The table and lampstand were the north side and the south side of the Holy Place respectively.

Briefly, the tabernacle symbolized God dwelling in the midst of his people and was a copy of the heavenly sanctuary (He 8:5; 9:23). The provision for sacrifices symbolized Israel’s need to approach God through mediation (He 7:23-28; 9:1-14). The priesthood symbolized the Great High Priest (cf. He 7:23). As to colors: white = holiness; blue = sky; purple = royalty; crimson = blood, though this is not made explicit in the text. The tabernacle with its tent-like structure has been compared to Christ, who “tented” (ἐσκήνωσεν) among us (Jn 1:14).

We should be cautious about allegorizing the details of the Tabernacle and its furnishings.

EXODUS 27

v. 1-7 The Altar of Burnt Offering (הַמִּזְבֵּחַ)

The square altar (5 cubits x 5 cubits x 3 cubits high), with horns on each corner, was to be overlaid with bronze. It was to stand in the courtyard. Interpreters are not sure whether or not his “box” was to be filled with earth when in use. The blood of the sin-offering was smeared upon the horns (Lv 4:7), and fugitives who fled to the altar laid hold on them (1 Kgs 1:50).

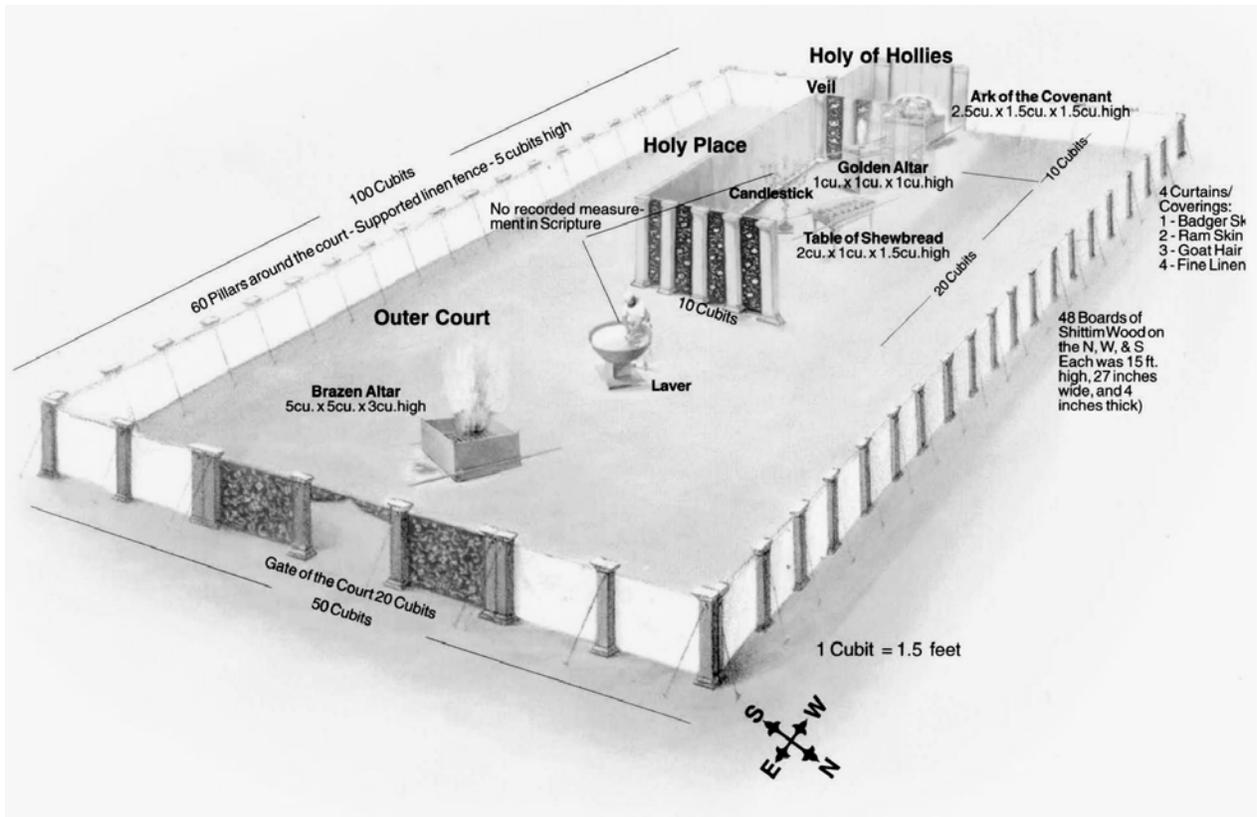
The grating for the altar seems to have been supported by a ledge halfway up the altar, or perhaps it was suspended from bracket that hung down from the framework (v 5). Some reconstructions of the outer ledge picture it as wide enough for the priest to stand on while working with the sacrifices, but the altar was probably approached by a ramp made of earth.

Utensils for fat, fire, and sacrificial purposes are provided for in the instructions.

v. 9-19 The Courtyard (הַיֵּצֵר הַמְּשֻׁכָּן)

The courtyard dimensions were 100 cubits x 50 cubits. It was enclosed by hangings of white linen, suspended on pillars. The entrance to this courtyard was on the east side.

Keil-Delitzsch points to the significance of the courtyard this way: Although Israel was chosen to be God's holy people, yet their fellowship with the LORD could be sustained only through mediators appointed and sanctified by God (i.e. Moses; Aaron, and the priesthood) who offered sacrifices for the people. Though the Tabernacle was separated from the common areas of the camp by a barrier, by means of the altar of burnt offering the covenant nation consecrated itself through daily sacrifices as a possession of God (p. 189-191). Israelites could bring their offerings through the gate of the sanctuary.



EXODUS 28

The opening verses (1-5) introduce the subject of garments for the priests, to be made for Aaron and his sons to give them honor and dignity.

v. 6-14 The Ephod for the High Priest (הַאֵפֹדִית)

This was a kind of waistcoat, elaborately embroidered, with front and back pieces joined at the shoulders by shoulder pieces (v. 7) and bound around the waist by a belt or sash (v. 8).

On each shoulder piece was an onyx stone, on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

An essential part of the ephod was the next item mentioned, the breastplate.

v. 15-30 The Breastplate of Judgment (הַשָּׁן מִשְׁפָּט)

This was a pouch, of the same material as the ephod, with four rows of precious stones, three to each row (the names of the stones are supplied, but their identity is rather uncertain, v. 17-20). There were twelve stones, one for each of the twelve tribes.

This pouch with stones was held to the ephod by means of gold chains. In this way Aaron was to bear upon his heart the sons of Israel.

Into the breast piece they were to put the Urim and Thummim (הַתְּמִימִים / הָאֲוִרִים). Their purpose: “Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the Lord” (v. 30).

The name Urim in Hebrew may mean “lights” or more probably “curses.” Thummim may mean “perfections.” The LXX renders these words with *δῆλωση* (revelation) and *ἀλήθεια* (truth). The Latin is *Lux et Veritas*. Precisely what these two objects were is uncertain. Since Urim begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet and Thummin with the last, some have suggested that they were able to use the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet to spell answers, but the accounts of their use imply that they gave only yes or no answers (1 Sa 10:20-22 2 Sa 5:22-24). By asking a series of questions more complex answers could be derived.

v. 31-35 The Robe of the Ephod (מְעִיל הָאֵפֹד)

This was a sleeveless outer garment woven of one piece of cloth. Around the edge of the knee-length skirt were woven small golden bells, and pomegranates made of twisted yarn. The sound of the bells was to warn against coming into the Lord’s presence without the proper preparation .

v. 36-38 The Headdress and Plate of Pure Gold (צִיץ זָהָב טָהוֹר and מִצְנֶפֶת)

A turban or cap of white linen, to which was affixed a gold plate on which were engraved the words HOLY TO THE LORD (קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה). Thereby the High Priest could mediate the sins of the people so that the gifts they brought would be acceptable to the LORD.

v. 39-43 The Linen Tunic (הַכְּתָנֶת שֵׁשׁ)

This was worn close to the body, beneath the ephod, reaching to the feet. The priests were also to wear line undergarments (v. 42).

EXODUS 29

This chapter relates the Lord’s directions concerning the consecration of the priests. According to Lv 8:7-9 nine acts were required for the investiture of the High Priest. These symbolic acts are here described in

detail. They were to be performed on each of seven successive days (v. 37). This chapter can be fully understood, as several commentators point out, only in connection with the sacrificial laws contained in the first seven chapters of Leviticus.

The chapter concludes (v. 36-46) with the directions for the daily burnt-offering, grain-offering, and drink-offering. Every day two lambs (one in the morning and one in the evening), flour mixed with oil, and wine were to be offered to the Lord.

EXODUS 30

v. 1-10 The Altar of Incense (מִזְבֵּחַ מִקְטָר קְטֹרֶת)

This small altar was placed in the Holy Place, directly in front of the veil separating this from the Holy of Holies. Only incense was to be burned on it, and this was to be done every morning and evening. On the horns of this altar Aaron was to “make atonement” once a year (v. 10, confer also Lv 17:11). Why this description is found here rather than in a preceding chapter is difficult to say.

In Scripture incense is symbolic of prayer (Ps 141:2; Lk 1:10; Re 5:8).

This altar was quite small, 2 cubits high x 1 cubit square.

v. 11-16 Atonement Money (כֶּסֶף הַכִּפָּרִים)

Every Israelite twenty years old and above was required to pay this at the numbering of the people. All were to pay equally, because all were equal in the LORD’s sight (v. 15). It was to be for “making atonement” for their lives (v. 16), pointing to their sinfulness and reminding the people of God’s grace as their only hope of salvation.

v. 17-21 The Bronze Basin for Washing (בַּיֹּזֶר נְחֹשֶׁת)

This was for the cleaning of priests for the performance of their duties. It was located between the brazen altar and the tabernacle itself. No detailed description of this basin is given.

v. 22-23 Anointing Oil (שֶׁמֶן מְשַׁחַת־קֹדֶשׁ)

A perfumed oil of myrrh, cinnamon, cassia, and fragrant cane was to be prepared for consecrating the tabernacle itself, its various furnishing, and the priests who served.

v. 34-38 Incense (קְטֹרֶת)

Incense prescribed for sacred use was also carefully prescribed. Its ingredients were gum, resin, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense. On these materials see the note of the NIV (Concordia) Study Bible at Ex 25:6.

EXODUS 31

v. 1-11 The chief craftsmen for the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the garments were chosen by God. The chief craftsmen were Bezalel of the tribe of Judah and his chief assistant Oholiab of the tribe of Dan. It may be of interest that Hiram, Solomon's chief artist for the temple, was also a Danite (2 Chr 2:13-14).
v. 12-17 God concludes by admonishing his people concerning the observance of the Sabbath in a most solemn manner.

References to the Sabbath as "a lasting covenant" (v. 16), a sign between God and Israel "forever" (v. 17) are to be understood as a reference to the enduring significance of the Sabbath rest. As a "shadow" of things to come, the Sabbath pointed to Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath (Mt 12:8), who by his saving work accomplished an eternal rest for the people of God. The Sabbath truly does reach into eternity. It leads finally to that eternal Sabbath which God prepared through his own resting upon completing his work of creation.

v. 18 Moses now received from the Lord the two tablets of stone on which the Decalogue was written, the "Testimony," inscribed "by the finger of God." The closing words are to be understood anthropomorphically. These tablets were of divine origin. They were unchanged by mouth and speech of man. They were from God – immediately and directly.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (TABERNACLE / PRIESTLY GARMENTS)

1. Give the symbolic significance of:
 - a. the tabernacle itself (He 8:5; 9:23-24; Jn 1:14)
 - b. the ark of the covenant with its atonement cover (He 4:16; 9:1-14; 1 Jn 2:1-2)
 - c. the mediating priesthood (He 7:23-28)
2. What purpose - both utilitarian and symbolic - did the following tabernacle appointments with their main features serve:
 - a. the table of the bread of the Presence (25:23-30)
 - b. the lampstand (25:31-40)
 - c. the altar of burnt offering (27:1-7)
 - d. the altar of incense (30:1-10)
 - e. the basin for washing (30:17-21)
3. Of what symbolic significance were the following items worn by the high priest:
 - a. the onyx stone on each shoulder-piece of the ephod (28:6-14)
 - b. the 12 stones on the breast piece of the ephod (28:15-30)
 - c. the bells attached to the robe (28:31-35)
 - d. the gold plate on the headdress (28:36-38)
4. What practical purpose did the Urim and Thummim serve (28:30; cf. also Nu 27:21)?
5. Why was Moses in no doubt as to the tabernacle's specifications and appearance?
6. Be able to draw a diagram of the tabernacle with its courtyard, indicating the dimensions as well as the chief appointments and their placement.
7. What regulations did the LORD give concerning "atonement money" and what purpose did this regulation serve?
8. In what sense do we understand that the Sabbath of rest was to be a "lasting covenant" and a sign

between God and his people “forever” (31:16-17)?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

For a visual representation see *The Tabernacle of God in the Wilderness of Sinai*, by Paul F. Kiene and the PowerPoint that accompanies this lesson.

The following books contain interesting suggestions and speculations on the construction of the Tabernacle, but like most books of this genre, they tend to go overboard on interpreting (allegorizing) the details.

Teaching from the Tabernacle, by Roy Lee DeWitt

The Tabernacle: Its Priests and Services, by William Brown

Read the Keil-Delitzsch *Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 182-185 for an interpretation of the symbolism of the tabernacle.

CHAPTER TEN
CALF WORSHIP,
THE COVENANT BROKEN AND RESTORED
COMPLETION OF THE TABERNACLE (Ex 32 - 40)

EXODUS 32

v. 1 “Come, make us a god” (אֱלֹהִים) is a preferable translation rather than “gods.” The Israelites seem to regard the calf as a way of visualizing and worshipping *Elohim*, their God. Many commentators argue, probably correctly, that the people and Aaron intended this visual deity to represent the LORD, the God of the exodus (v. 5).

Since some gods in both Egypt and Canaan were symbolized by bulls, it has been suggested that the calf was a representation of the LORD, but since bulls, lions, and other animals often served as pedestals on which the image of the deity stood, the Israelites may have excused themselves with the notion that the calf was simply a pedestal for the invisible Yahweh, not an image of him.

The amazing fact that both Israel and Aaron (v. 21) are capable of the breach of the covenant so soon after it had been so solemnly established is only partly explained by the desire to visualize the LORD. The fact that the image chosen was that of a calf seems to indicate that the external pomp and splendor of Egyptian idolatry had made a lasting but unwholesome impression on the Israelites, creating an appetite which was not entirely satisfied with the spiritual worship into which the LORD was leading them. Moses’ delay was a test. Israel failed to meet this test.

v. 2 Aaron succumbed. Perhaps he hoped to divert the people by his request for gold earrings. But if so, his cleverness was put to shame. His act was a denial of faith in the true God (Dt 9:20). He declared that the feast should be in honor of the LORD! (see the use of Tetragrammaton in v. 5!) This was syncretism at work!

Some wish to argue that not all the Israelites participated, since only 3000 were immediately punished for this sin (v. 28). This is beside the point. Whatever the case, the whole nation was responsible. God dealt with them as a whole nation, and as a community they bore collectively the guilt of a broken covenant with God (compare Achan’s sin, Jos 7). Here, too, as the Lord indicates to Moses (v. 9 and 10), his anger was directed against the entire nation.

v. 9-13 God puts the fate of Israel into the hands of the mediatorial office of Moses. Moses stands the test, as his intercession shows. In no way did he condone the sin of Israel, but bases his appeal for forgiveness on the need for upholding the honor of God and the inviolability of the promise to Abraham.

v. 14 “Then the LORD relented (נָחַם)...” Not a change of mind in the case of God, but a change in course of action in consequence of a change in the conduct of people. (See 1 Sa 15:10&35 compared with 1 Sa 15:29)

v. 19 “His anger burned ...” The extent of this anger demonstrated in his breaking the stone tablets, pulverizing the image, and letting the people literally drink the results of their sin.

v. 22-24 “You know how prone these people are to evil.” Aaron’s excuse is so contemptible that Moses does not even think it worthy of reply. “I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.” What a fatuous

statement!

v. 26 “‘Whoever is for the Lord, come to me.’ And the Levites rallied to him.” The appearance and anger of Moses did not bring contrition and repentance from some of the rebellious Israelites. Many were determined to stay their course and continue to reject Moses and the LORD whom he represented. Not so the Levites. Thus the Levites showed themselves worthy of the priestly honor bestowed upon them, as Moses states in v. 29. The Levites became the peculiar possession of the LORD (Nu 3 and 4). The curse which rested upon the Levites because of their vengeance upon the Shechemites was turned into a blessing (Gn 49:7 and Dt 33:9).

v. 30-32 Moses’ great intercession: “Oh, what a great sin ... But now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.”

The book of the LORD is the book of life (Ps 69:28; Dn 12:1; Php 4:3; Re 3:5). To blot someone out of this book is to cut him off from the fellowship of the living God. As a true mediator Moses was ready to stake his life for the deliverance of the nation (compare also Paul in Ro 9:1-3). Moses’ life, however, could not atone for sin.

v. 33-35 The Lord accepts Moses’ intercession and promises to lead them on: “My angel will go before you.” However, God first visited a plague upon his people to serve as a warning for the future.

Notes:

1. This story emphasizes the despicable sin of Israel in committing this idolatrous act so soon after God made a solemn covenant with them on Sinai.
2. While this emphasis is in place, a striking feature of the same story is often forgotten. This is Moses’ great acts of intercession, reflected in v. 11-13 and 31-32. Moses in no way tries to mitigate the greatness of Israel’s sin nor to condone it. His own anger over it is shown by the breaking of the tables of the Law, and the prompt action he takes to expose the deed and to bring its leaders to justice. This is a righteous anger.

But Moses does throw Israel’s case upon the mercy of God. He reminds God of his promises. He even stakes his own life on the people’s deliverance. His own personal disappointment over the fickle attitude of the people, which must have run deep, was off-set by his love for them, which ran deeper. Bengel comments: “It is not easy to estimate the love in a Moses and a Paul; for the narrow boundary of our reasoning powers does not comprehend it, as the little child is unable to comprehend the courage of warlike heroes” (*Gnomon of the NT*).

The next chapter continues to throw light on this as part of Moses’ character.

3. Chapters 19 through 34 relate at least seven visits of Moses to the top of Sinai:
 - 1) 19:1-8 Lord welcomes his people upon arrival at Sinai (eagles wings, peculiar people)
 - 2) 19:9-15 Receiving instructions to sanctify the people.
 - 3) 19:16-20:21 Moses warned about the people’s carelessness.
 - 4) 20:21-24:4 Moses’ receipt of the Mishpatim.

- 5) 24:9-12 The Covenant Meal.
- 6) 24:13-32:15 Moses goes up into the mount for 40 days, instructions for the tabernacle.
- 7) 32:31-34:29 Moses pleads for the people and receives tablets again. (The parameters for this visit are vague and may include more than one visit. Some things are mentioned within these verses that either happened before, after, or between several visits.)

EXODUS 33

v. 3 “But I will not go with you.” As God had previously promised Moses that an angel would lead them onwards, here the Lord makes his threat clearer. “Angel” here obviously refers to a messenger of God, not God himself.

v. 4 The reaction of the people is overwhelming sorrow. Finally as an act of humble repentance they stripped themselves of all ornaments.

v. 7-23 What follows is a continuation of Moses’ activity as mediator. He set up a temporary sanctuary “outside the camp” (v. 7), indicating Israel’s separation from God because of their sin. Conversation with the LORD, however, was still to be carried on through this means.

The LORD appeared in a pillar of cloud at the entrance of this tent and there spoke “face to face” with Moses (v. 11). The Lord “never appeared in his own essential glory, but only in such a mode as human weakness could bear” (KD).

Moses now asks the Lord to make clear his intentions: “Are you or are you not going to lead this people as your own people to Canaan?” (v. 13)

The Lord gives assurance: “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (v. 14). Thus the covenant bond was restored.

But to banish all doubt in view of what had happened, Moses persists: “Now show me your glory” (v. 18). Calvin comments: Moses was urged to offer this request not out of curiosity or audacity, but moved by “a desire to cross the chasm which had been made by the apostasy of the nation, so that for the future he might have a firmer footing than previous history had given him.”

The LORD granted this request, “but only so far as the limit existing between the infinite and holy God and finite and sinful man allowed” (KD, p. 237) (compare v. 19 and 20). Precautions were made to protect Moses (v. 21-23). What occurred here will never be fully known. We know that no man can see God’s face and live (Jn 1:18; 6:46; 1 Tm 1:17; 1 Jn 4:12), but Moses undoubtedly did see things which human tongue can never utter. The reflection of the “glory of the Lord” was evident in Moses’ later appearance before Israel.

August Pieper comments: “We cannot comprehend God beyond the earnestness of his Law and the faithfulness of his Gospel-promise.” The following chapter, in which the LORD proclaims his NAME, underscores this. Only in the cross of Christ are justice and mercy, law and gospel brought together and reconciled! (Romans 3)

EXODUS 34

v. 1-26 According to God's instructions Moses ascends the mount with stone tablets to replace those that had been broken (v. 1-3).

What Moses saw we are not told, but simply the words in which the LORD proclaimed all the glory of his being (v. 5). This "sermon on the name of the Lord" as Luther calls it, proclaims that God is love, but a love in which mercy, grace, long-suffering, goodness, and truth are united with holiness and justice (v. 5-7). We recall A. Pieper's words that only in the cross of Christ is God's mercy and his justice reconciled. In the following verses (v. 11-26) the duties of the covenant are once more summarized, especially the warning against every kind of alliance with the Canaanites, and instructions concerning the true worship of the LORD. Note again the conclusion of this summary in verse 26a!

v. 27-28 Moses' writing down the fundamental conditions of the covenant was proof of its restoration.

v. 29-35 The reflection of the glory of the Lord upon the face of Moses also was a token of the reinstatement of the covenant. Paul uses this strange happening in 2 Corinthians 3 to compare the "ministry of condemnation" with the "ministry of righteousness."

Unfortunately the translations of the KJV and of Luther convey the impression that the veil on Moses' face served to hide this "glory" while Moses was speaking to Israel, a concession to the fears of the people who were unable to endure this splendor. The fact of the matter is (as the NIV and other translations convey) that Israel did see the Lord's glory reflected upon the face of Moses (v. 33 and 35!). What Israel did not see was the fading of this glory, since "when Moses finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face" (v. 33). At this time the Lord did not want Israel to see the temporary nature of the Law Covenant in its pedagogical purpose.

This glory was "done away in Christ (2 Cor 3:14), superseded by a new ministration of the Spirit." This fact the Israel of Paul's day failed to appreciate (A. Pieper, *WLQ*, 1934, p. 1).

Note: In v. 29, "that his (Moses') face was radiant," is the translation of a word which Jerome translated as "horn" (קֶרֶן, horn; קָרָן, shine). Michelangelo's statue of Moses therefore depicts him with horns rather than rays coming from his head.

EXODUS 35, 36, 37, 38, 39

Now that the covenant was restored, Israel was ready for the erection of the tabernacle. Understandably the sabbath regulations were once more enjoined before this time of busy activity was to begin (35:1-3). Freewill offerings were gathered (35:19), which proved to be more than enough (36:5-7). All this took place in a spirit of spiritual devotion and with blessing (39:43). In an incredibly short period of time (Edersheim reckons "within six months") the work was completed (Exodus 40:17).

We see here some excellent guides for stewardship. When law and gospel are proclaimed in all fullness, and when the need is clearly demonstrated to the people, freewill offerings will result in an outpouring of "more than enough" (36:5), so that the people will need to be "restrained from bringing more" (36:6). We can recommend this as a stewardship text, especially when some people wish to suggest that other means are needed to "get results."

The record of the construction in these chapters follows the account of the instructions (Exodus Ch. 25-31) almost verbatim. This is not useless repetition, but emphasizes Israel's careful adherence to the stipulations of the Lord. The repetition of the directions also emphasizes their restoration.

Attempts to value the previous metals used in the construction of the tabernacle, as the Wycliffe Bible Commentary points out, “do not mean much” (p. 85) because of the changing values of commodities in relationship to income. The expenditure certainly must have been enormous. Here we think of the wealth acquired from the Egyptians immediately before the departure from Egypt.

Note: In Ex 25:1 mention was made of a “heave” or a “lift-offering,” one dedicated to God for his use.

In Ex 38:24 another type of offering is referred to, a “wave-offering” (תְּנוּפָה, from נוּף which means literally “move back and forth.”) Instead of being lifted up, this offering was waved back and forth, perhaps from donor to priest and back, or from priest to the altar and back. In the case of sacrifices a portion of the meat was given back to the priest or to the donor for his use.

EXODUS 40

The setting up of the tabernacle is simply stated. It was set up for use on the first month of the second year of the exodus from Egypt (v. 17), 9½ months after the arrival at Sinai. Israel remained here an additional two months before setting out, according to Numbers 10.

“Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (v. 34). We understand here “tent of meeting” and “tabernacle” to be one and the same. The pillar of cloud, with which the LORD guided Israel by day, settled upon the dwelling and also filled it with the presence of the LORD. The LORD himself consecrated his sanctuary. Even Moses was unable to enter it. (Later on the cloud rested upon the ark, so that the priests were able to enter the holy place.)

So long as the cloud rested upon the tabernacle, the children of Israel remained encamped. When the cloud ascended, they broke up camp and proceeded onwards (also Nu 9:15-23).

The Glory of the LORD settling upon the tabernacle signifies that God is taking formal possession of this dwelling and associating himself with the Ark of the Covenant.

It is significant that the book of Exodus closes with a final presentation of the Glory of the LORD (v. 34-38). This expression, begun as a special manifestation of God to Abraham in Genesis 15 (although not in the same name) is resumed again in the very beginning of Exodus (ch. 3). Although the appearance in the burning bush lacks the designation, “by its form and other accompanying circumstances it can immediately be recognized as such” (August Pieper, *The Glory of the Lord*, p. 15). At Succoth the LORD offers a special manifestation of his providential guidance in the pillar of cloud and of fire. At the Red Sea the LORD declares: “I will gain glory through Pharaoh” (Ex 14:15, using a Niphal verb form of כָּבַד), which is followed by Israel’s miraculous rescue and safe passage through the sea. The expression

“glory of the LORD” (כְּבוֹד יְהוָה) actually appears for the first time *expressis verbis* in Exodus 16:7.

The Lord’s promise of food in the wilderness, which later is fulfilled in the sending of manna and quails, is thus described by Moses and Aaron. From this time on the Lord reveals himself repeatedly in connection with the establishing of his covenant at Mount Sinai, and frequently this expression “glory of the LORD” occurs. Especially as the LORD manifests his presence in connection with the tabernacle do we find both the revelation and the expression itself.

For a thorough study of this expression we recommend *The Glory of the LORD*, which appears in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* in a series of articles by Prof. August Pieper in 1933 and 1934, and has been translated into English by Pastor John Schaadt and Prof. Carl Lawrenz and has been reprinted in *The*

Wauwatosa Theology, Vol. II, p. 417ff. Prof. Pieper, in explaining the use of this term, sets forth the relationship between God's grace and his wrath, the distinction between law and gospel, and the meaning of Old and New Covenants in a very convincing way, at the same time contributing much to an understanding of God's revelation in the book of Exodus.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Ex 32-40)

1. What reason did the Israelites give for requesting Aaron to make them a god? Why was this request especially reprehensible at this time?
2. In what ways did Aaron apparently try to forestall or compromise the situation?
3. How did God express his extreme displeasure to Moses? In what way did Moses show himself to be a worthy mediator?
4. How did Moses express his anger when he actually saw what was going on? What pitiful excuses did Aaron offer?
5. Which tribe distinguished itself at this occasion, and how was this later recognized? (Compare Ex 32:9 with Dt 33:8-11).
6. How did Moses try to atone for the people's sin? What answer did he receive?
7. Describe Moses' efforts to gain reassurance from the Lord (Ch 33).
8. Outline the parts of what Luther calls God's "Sermon on the Name of the LORD" (Ex 34:5-7). Where alone are grace and holiness reconciled?
9. By what various acts is Israel reassured that the covenant is reconfirmed?
10. Explain the significance of God's glory as reflected in the face of Moses, and how does the Apostle Paul apply this in 2 Cor 3:7-13?
11. Which important lessons for stewardship are contained in Ex 35 and 36?
12. Which expression occurs several times at the close of Exodus? Explain the significance of this expression (cf. A. Pieper).

FOR FURTHER STUDY

For what occasions or special applications do the following texts from Exodus lend themselves?

Ex 3:1-5	Ex 5:19:6:1	Ex 15:22-27	Ex 24:9-11	Ex 36:6-7
Ex 3:11-15	Ex 12:1-13	Ex 17:8-16	Ex 32:9-14	Ex 39:42-43
Ex 4:1-17	Ex 14:13-15	Ex 18:24-26	Ex 33:19-20	Ex 40:34-35
Ex 4:19-20	Ex 15:13	Ex 19:3-6	Ex 34:5-8	

CHAPTER ELEVEN

INTRODUCTION TO LEVITICUS; THE SACRIFICIAL CODE (Lv 1-7)

The book gets its English name “Leviticus,” from the Septuagint (Λευιτικός—pertaining to the Levites) via the Vulgate. In Hebrew the book is named from its first word: אֶלֶּה־וְקָרָאֵם And he called ...” It was received and recorded by Moses during the year at Sinai.

Leviticus presents the laws or codes which specify the conditions of worship among God’s covenant people under the theme:

The Holiness of the Covenant People

Leviticus is made up primarily of three law codes:

- A. The Sacrificial Code (Ch. 1-7)
- B. The Code of Purification (Ch. 11-16)
- C. The Holiness Code (Ch. 17-27)

The major sub-themes to holiness are sin, sacrifice, and cleanness.

The book contains only two historical incidents: the circumstances surrounding the ordination of the priests (ch. 8-10) and the case of blasphemy against the Name יהוה (ch. 24:10-14). Chapters 8-10 contain the regulations pertaining to the priests themselves, including the ordination of Aaron and his sons and the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, Aaron’s sons who “offered unauthorized fire before the Lord.”

The Holiness of the Covenant People

- I. The Code for the sacrifices that restore holiness (Ch. 1-7)
[The holiness of the priesthood (Ch. 8-10)]
- II. The Code for preserving holiness through rites of cleansing and atonement (Ch. 11-16)
- III. The Holiness Code (Ch. 17-27).
 - A. Only one place of sacrifice (17).
 - B. Laws of moral holiness (18-20)
 - C. Regulations for priests, offerings, and feasts (21-24:9)
 - D. The Holy Name (24:10-23)
 - E. The Sabbaths and Jubilee (25)
 - F. Blessings and curses (26)
 - G. Vows to the Lord (27)

Exodus tells how the LORD set apart a people as his special possession. How this people is to approach and live before this Savior-God is now the subject of Leviticus. The entire first section (A and B of first outline) shows the way of access to the throne of grace. The later section (C) sets forth the response of the people who live in fellowship with God and enjoy the blessings of his grace. By way of analogy we can say that A and B feature justification, and C gives expression to sanctification.

The first section culminates in the yearly day of atonement (ch. 16). The other section culminates in the appointment of the sabbatical and jubilee years (ch. 25). The conclusion (ch. 26) stresses the importance of faithful observance of this covenant in the form of blessings, curses, and to this is attached an appendix (ch. 27) which stresses the sanctity of vows.

This unity of the book of Leviticus in its simplicity has confounded the source critics to no end.

Attempting to divide the book in its various codes according to different times when each code is presumed to have come into existence, they remind us of meddlers who take apart a perfect mechanism and then can't put it all together again. That this unity of Leviticus again attests to its Mosaic authorship is self-evident.

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PART I – THE SACRIFICIAL CODE

A most important feature of Leviticus is its detailed specification of the sacrifices which Israel was to offer in its worship as God's covenant people. Since these reflect the Messianic promise, we need to study them also in the light of their New Testament significance.

The idea of offering sacrifices as a part of worship was nothing new to Israel. Animal sacrifices go back as far as Abel (Gn 4:4). The sacrifices of Cain and Abel as well as those of Noah (Gn 9:3) were expressions of a desire for fellowship with God and gratitude for his blessings. Sacrifices were certainly a part of the worship-life of the patriarchs. Both burnt offerings, expressing surrender to God, as well as the slain offerings (Gn 31:54), which served as a seal of covenant fellowship with God, were frequently observed.

The expiatory offerings, i.e., offerings for sin and trespass, although already reflected in the slaying of sacrificial animals, is expressed more explicitly in the code given at Sinai. There the LORD appeared in the glory of his holiness, to conclude his covenant of grace with his people by the blood of burnt offerings and slain offerings (Ex 24). These prepared the way for the laws of sacrifice found in Leviticus, showing that it was only by way of sacrifice that a sinful nation could enter into fellowship with a holy God. Leviticus organized the worship life of God's people through a careful codification of its sacrifices. Its regulations augmented the basic principles which the Lord gave Moses on Sinai (Lv 1:1).

COMMON FEATURES OF THE BLOOD SACRIFICES

The blood sacrifices in the Old Testament were four in number: Burnt, Fellowship (Peace), Sin, and Guilt. They had the following common features:

1. **The Sacrificial Victim.** Other than the fact that this victim was to be without blemish, there is little uniformity as to the nature of the victim. This varied from a young bull to a pair of turtle doves, and could be either male or female.
2. **The Presentation.** The victim was presented for examination at the door of the tabernacle (Lv 1:3).
3. **The Laying on of Hands** (תָּמַדָּ). The offerer dedicated his sacrifice to God; either for worship, prayer, thanksgiving, or confession of sin (compare Is 53:6).
4. **The Slaughtering.** This was done by the offerer or in certain cases by the priest. The animal was killed, flayed, cut in pieces, and prepared for sacrifice. The place for this was the north side of the altar.
5. **The Use of Blood.** The blood was applied against the four sides of the Great Altar (either dashed or sprinkled), or applied to the horns of the Great Altar or Altar of Incense, or poured out at the foot of the Great Altar, or sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. This use of blood was an indispensable

part of the offering, an atonement for sin (Lv 17:11), a price of rendering satisfaction for sin, a way of reconciliation (see He 9:11f).

6. The Consuming of the Flesh. In the whole burnt offering the flesh was burned completely on the altar (some parts were sometimes burned outside the camp). In other cases parts were burned on the altar, and part was consumed by the priests or shared in a sacrificial meal by the offering family.

THE VARIATIONS OF BLOOD SACRIFICES

1. The Whole Burnt Offering (holocaust) (OLAH – עֹלָה from עָלָה, to “go up” or “ascend”).
Leviticus 1

This was totally consumed upon the altar. It was the daily rite used in the morning and evening--the solemn opening and close of worship. It symbolized Israel's total devotion and dedication to the Lord. The use of blood also indicated that this daily rite had an expiatory purpose (cf. v. 1 “make atonement”). (For NT applications see Ro 12:1; 1 Cor 6:20; He 13:15f.)

2. The Peace or Fellowship Offering (ZEBACH SHELAMIM – זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים from זָבַח, “slaughter” or “offer,” and שָׁלֵם, “peace” “ or “wholeness,” “completion”). It is sometimes also called the Shared Offering or the Celebration Offering. Leviticus 3

This was giving glory to God at festive occasions in individual or corporate life, or to express thanks to God for special blessings of help experienced in fulfilling a vow.

The entire offering was dedicated to God, but a portion was to be consumed in part by the priests and in part by the offering family. Thus it was a communal meal. Blood, however, was used to remind the people that such communion could only be enjoyed as a result of atonement for sin. (New Testament significance: Holy Communion; fellowship in worship and prayer. Confer Ac 2:42; 1 Cor 10:14-17.)

3. The Sin Offering (CHATTATH – חַטָּאת from the Hebrew verb חָטָא, which means “to miss the mark,” “miss the way,” “go wrong.” In the piel it means to “de-sin,” to remove sin) Leviticus 4:1-5:13

This was for sins of priests, or of individuals, or of the entire people, offering absolution to contrite sinners, culminating in the offering on the Day of Atonement. This is the sacrifice which demonstrated most clearly the expiation of sin before God.

The ceremonial use of blood, therefore, played a much more prominent role in the *Chattath* than in any other offering. It was in some cases applied to the horns of the Great Altar, in others sprinkled or applied to the Altar of Incense, or on the Day of Atonement even brought to the *Kapphoreth* in the Most Holy Place. Interestingly enough in the sacrifice where blood was the most prominent, if a person could not afford any kind of allowable animal for the sacrifice (Lv 5:11), he could bring some grain which would be put on top of the sacrifices already on the altar, and he could in this way piggyback on the offering of some previous worshiper. Nobody should be unable to afford an offering for sin.

In this case, the flesh of the sacrifice was either partially consumed by the priests, or it was burnt outside the camp.

(In the New Testament the *Chattath* is used as the picture of the atonement of Christ, particularly in Hebrews 7, 9, and 10. Also 1 Pe 1:2; 1 Jn 1:7; Re 7:14).

4. The Trespass or Guilt Offering (ASHAM – אֲשָׁם from אָשַׁם, “become guilty,” אָשָׁם “guilt”). Also called the Reparation Offering. Leviticus 5:14-6:7

Here the emphasis is on guilt, the liability which has been incurred by trespassing upon the rights or property of another, or transgressions of ceremonial laws. In the case of the *Asham* the element of restitution recurs constantly, not always in the sense of amends for past errors, but as an exercise in discipline. Delitzsch summarizes the difference between Sin and Trespass offerings by stating that in the first case the basic idea is the *expiatio*, and in the latter case the *satisfactio*. In the former the evangelical character prevails; in the latter the disciplinary. In every case, it should be noted, an atonement was still needed, which could be supplied only through the means established by God’s grace: the sacrificial blood.

It was normal procedure in the case of the *Asham* that part of the flesh was eaten by the priests.

(In the NT there are many practical applications to Christian life in the exercise of Christian discipline, bringing forth the fruits of repentance in a life of good works. Confer Lk 3:8; Ro 6:22; Ga 5:22; Eph 5:9).

Gordon Wenham points out in his *Commentary on the Book of Leviticus* that all the laws concerning sacrifices in the first seven chapters of Leviticus relate chiefly to offerings to be brought spontaneously, either by individuals or by the whole community. These chapters contain no rules respecting either time or presenting the sacrifices or the order which they are to follow. The ritual itself, however, is carefully prescribed.

Wenham also stresses that all blood sacrifices had an element of expiation about them. He differentiates their significance in this respect as follows:

עֹלָם – a personal offering in which the animal is sacrificed entirely for the individual.

זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים – individual or group fellowship with the Lord, requiring advance expiation.

חֲטָאת – sin defiles; the sacrifice purifies from sin.

אֲשָׁם – sin is a debt; reparation is necessary to repay the debt.

His study on Leviticus, in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Eerdmans), suggests many valuable insights.

For a more detailed presentation see the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 43 and 44, 1946 and 1947, which has a series of articles on “The Blood Sacrifices of the OT,” by Prof. E. Reim. The following is an abbreviation of Reim’s chart. The full chart is available as a supplementary file.

A Summary Diagram of the Essentials of OT Blood-Sacrifices

<u>DESIGNATION</u>	BURNT עֹלָה	FELLOWSHIP זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים	SIN חַטָּאת	GUILT אָשָׁם
OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTIC	Totally consumed Daily Rite	Communal meal	Ceremonial of blood	For specific sins
OLD TESTAMENT USE	Total Devotion Personal and Community	Thanksgiving Special Occasions	Expiation for All Sins	Expiation with Restitution
NEW TESTAMENT COUNTERPART	Ro 12: 1 He 13:15f 1 Cor 6:20	Ac 2: 42 1 Cor 10:14-17 1 Cor 11:17-33 1 Cor 12:12-31	He 7:26-28 He 9:11-15 1 Pe 1:2 1 Jn 1:7 Re 7:14	Lk 3:8 Ro 6:22 Ga 5:22 Eph 5:9
OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES	Daily Morning and Evening Sacrifices (Lv 6:8-13)	Elkanah (1 Sm 1:5) Installation of Saul (1 Sm 11:15) Solomon (1 Kgs 8:63) Hezekiah (2 Chr 19:35)	Day of Atonement (Lv 16)	Lepers’ Cleansing (Lv 14:14) Philistines (1 Sm 6)

THE GRAIN OFFERING

In addition to these four basic “Blood Sacrifices,” the book of Leviticus describes another important offering, known as the Grain or Meal Offering (MINCHAH – מִנְחָה). *Minchah* means “gift” or “tribute”, hence any unbloody offering). Here the term is used in a special technical sense. The part of the offering actually offered to the Lord was called the memorial portion (אֶזְכָּרָה). Leviticus 2

This sacrifice was an offering of grain in the ear, fine flour, or baked goods, mixed with oil, frankincense, and salt. No leaven or honey was allowed, to avoid fermentation and corruption. The offerings of wine and beer which accompanied offerings are not mentioned here.

This offering was not offered separately, but with a bloody sacrifice. A portion of it was to go to the priests.

The purpose of the *Minchah* was to train Israel to look to God for daily bread and to receive it with thanksgiving (compare the Lord’s Prayer, Fourth Petition). Meat and drink offerings were not a means of expiation, nor did they include the idea of representation. They were simply gifts of thanksgiving offered to the Lord as fruits of the labor of their hands.

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DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES OF PRIESTS AT THESE OFFERINGS (Lv 6:8-7:38)

This portion of Leviticus relates not so much to the viewpoint of the worshiper approaching the altar with a sacrifice, but to the priests in the exercise of their office. Although many of the instructions in the previous section are repeated, many regulations are new, particularly as these apply to the rights and duties of the priests themselves in relation to:

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. The Burnt Offering (Lv 6:8-13) | עֹלָה |
| 2. The Meal or Grain Offering (Lv 6:14-23) | מִנְחָה |
| 3. The Sin Offering (Lv 6:24-30) | חַטָּאת |
| 4. The Trespass or Guilt Offering (Lv 7:1-10) | אָשָׁם |
| 5. The Peace or Fellowship Offering (Lv 7:11-21) | זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים |

Note the different order in which the offerings occur.

The eating of blood or fat was strictly prohibited (Lv 7:22-27). The fat was the Lord's (Lv 3:16), and "the life of a creature is in the blood" (Lv 17:11). Blood was therefore the sign of redemption.

The priest's share (also referred to as "Yahweh's share") of the *Zebach Shelamim* is referred to in Leviticus 7:28-36. The priests were to receive the breast and the right thigh, choice portions. The individual making the offering was to bring it to the altar. That portion which was the priest's (breast piece and thigh) was presented to the Lord as a wave-offering (תְּנוּפָה from נוּף – "to swing," "to move to and fro"). It was lifted and moved or waved toward the altar, in symbolic transference to God, and then moved or waved back again, as a present which God handed over to his servants, the priests (Ex 35:22 and Ex 29:26).

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With Leviticus 7 the section relating to the five species of sacrifices is brought to a close. These five sacrifices embraced every aspect in which Israel was to manifest its true relation to the Lord. The burnt and peace offerings (*Olah* and *Zebach Shelamim*) shadowed the sanctification of the people in self-surrender to the Lord. The meal offering (*Minchah*) shadowed the thankfulness of the believer for God's abundant blessings. The expiatory offerings (*Chattath* and *Asham*) furnished the means of removing the barrier of sins and trespasses between the sinner and the holy God.

All bloody sacrifices, of course, were efficacious only in the light of and in anticipation of the true sacrifice of Jesus Christ, of which the animal sacrifices were a type or shadow. The peace or fellowship offerings were symbolic of the fellowship already established between Israel and the covenant God, a type of that true and living fellowship which consists in God dwelling in our hearts through his Spirit (confer Hebrews chapters 9 and 10).

All was thus preparatory for the appearance of Christ, our great High Priest, who through the offering of his own body would perfect all the sacrifices of the Old Testament covenant relationship.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Lv 1-7)

1. What is the theme of Leviticus? Which three law codes are arranged under this theme? Give the chapters of each code.
2. What distinction can we make between the people's relationship to God as expressed in the first two codes and as expressed in the final code? Of which doctrinal distinction does this remind us?
3. Which festival marks the culmination of the first two codes? Which calendar arrangement is prescribed toward the end of the final code? To what simple but important fact does this arrangement of Leviticus again bear testimony?
4. What outstanding truth is emphasized by the various expiatory blood sacrifices set forth in Leviticus?
5. Which progressive steps do all the blood-sacrifices have in common?
6. Which two types of blood-sacrifices give expression to the covenant relationship? Which two show how this relationship between God and his people was to be restored?
7. Whose sacrifice made all sacrifices efficacious? Give some NT passages which emphasize this truth.
8. Which type of offering accompanied a blood-sacrifice? Describe it and give its significance for Israel.
9. Which two items from the sacrifice were not to be consumed? Why?

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

1. Name the four kinds of blood-sacrifices specified in the first six chapters of Leviticus. Be able to give the Hebrew designation as well as the English transliteration of each.
2. For each blood sacrifice give:
 - a. The outstanding characteristic:
 - b. The OT use:
 - c. The NT counterpart:
 - d. An OT example of the use of each:

FOR FURTHER STUDY

The accompanying WLS powerpoint on sacrifice.

Leviticus: Lessons in Sacred Silhouettes, a seven-lesson powerpoint Bible class by Daniel Habben.
Lesson 4

CHAPTER TWELVE HOLINESS OF THE PRIESTS (Lv 8-10) CODE OF PURIFICATION (Lv 11-16)

LEVITICUS 8

Following the regulations pertaining to blood sacrifices and grain offering (Ch 1-7), we are told in this

chapter about the ordination of Aaron and his sons into their priestly office. Already in Exodus 29 we heard how Moses received instructions from the LORD concerning this solemn service. Much in Leviticus 8 is therefore a repetition of Exodus 29. This time, however, we can gain a better understanding of the various types of sacrifices offered at this because of the explanations that were given in the opening chapters of Leviticus. The fact that many of the same details are repeated here again shows the care with which God's express orders were executed.

In the report given in Leviticus 8 we note the centrality of Moses in this service of ordination. He is both mediator and ordaining priest. Aaron is the ordained, who is here publicly recognized as he receives his awesome responsibility as chief mediator between God and people in the tabernacle worship. The Hebrew expression rendered "ordain" is "fill the hand" (מלא היד). "Ordination" is מלאים, literally "fillings." These terms seem to refer to the handing over of the duties of the priesthood to those who had been chosen by God. Their duties were now "placed into their hands." The terms thus have the same connotation as our English term "installation." Leviticus 16:32 and 21:10 imply that successors to the office of high priest were also "ordained." Priests were also "consecrated" (קדש, Ex 29:1, Lv 8:10-12) and "appointed" (פקד) to the priesthood (Nu 3:10) and to specific tasks (Nu 3:32,36).

Similarly today our ordination services serve to substantiate the call from the Lord into his special service, publicly recognizing that he who is ordained is now ready and willing to enter upon his high calling.

v. 1-9 Aaron and his sons are presented to the entire assembly by Moses. Their garments are symbolically washed and placed upon them, and upon Aaron the ephod with the breast piece containing the Urim and Thummim and also the turban with gold plate engraved with the words HOLY TO THE LORD (קדש ליהוה).

v. 10-13 The tabernacle, its appointments as well as the priests are anointed with oil.

v. 14-17 The תטאת ("the bull for the sin offering") served to consecrate the altar and to purify it for its use.

v. 18-21 The עולה ("the ram for the burnt offering") was used in an act signifying the priesthood's devotion to the LORD.

v. 22-29 The other ram was the ram for the ordination. The שלמים and מנחה at this special occasion expressed thanksgiving to the Lord and fellowship with him. Blood was placed on the ears, hands and toes, symbolic of the priests' total dedication to God's service. Blood was applied to the altar and the garments of the priests.

LEVITICUS 9

In this chapter we are told how the Lord's instructions concerning offerings were carried out by Aaron and his sons as they began their ministry. The various offerings were carefully performed as prescribed on the eighth day (following the seven-day ordination ritual). On this eighth day the glory of the LORD

(כְּבוֹד יְהוָה) appeared as “fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar” (v. 24).

The ordination offerings were a bull calf for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering for Aaron.

Additional offerings for Israel were a goat for a sin offering, a calf and a ram for a burnt offering, and an ox and a ram for a fellowship offering, with a grain offering.

Other instances of fire from the Lord consuming an offering:

- a. Announcement of Samson’s birth (Jdg 13)
- b. Solomon’s dedication of the temple (2 Chr 7)
- c. Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18)

LEVITICUS 10

v. 1-2 Nadab and Abihu, Aaron’s two oldest sons, “offered unauthorized fire before the Lord,” and “fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them.” Perhaps the sons arrogated priestly functions to themselves which only Aaron could perform. Or they may have kindled their own fire rather than taking it from burning coals upon the altar (cf. Ex 30:9). The matter is not explained further.

v. 3 In any case, the LORD demonstrated by this severe act of punishment the importance of adhering closely to his rules concerning priestly functions, as is indicated in the words cited in verse 3. This is a warning to all servants of the Lord. The closer a man is to God in his service, the more he needs to be in awe of the holiness and glory of his presence.

Note the poignant comment: “Aaron remained silent.”

v. 6-11 The priests are warned in this connection “against expressions of grief” (unkempt hair, torn clothing) when mourning this death “by fire.” They are also told to abstain from drinking strong wine when serving the LORD. This suggests that drunkenness may have played a role in the sin of Nadab and Abihu. “And you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the LORD has given them through Moses,” the LORD declares. This calls attention to an important priestly function often overlooked. There was more to serving as priest than offering sacrifices!

v. 12 The two remaining sons in Aaron’s family, Eleazar and Ithamar, are mentioned. Both played important roles in Israel’s history.

v. 16-20 Apparently Eleazar and Ithamar were confused with the directions dealing with cereal and sin offerings or overwhelmed with shock and grief (Lv 6:24-30) and failed to eat the meat of the goat in the sanctuary area. Aaron pleaded in their behalf, sharing in the blame, and they were not punished by Moses. This action is reported, no doubt, to show the difference between the sin of Eleazar and Ithamar and that of Nadab and Abihu. Open defiance will be severely punished. Acts of a non-malicious nature can be appealed.

Thus the section dealing with the SACRIFICIAL CODE closes with a chapter in which the LORD impresses upon his people the importance of taking his regulations pertaining to these priestly duties in all seriousness.

PART II – THE CODE OF PURIFICATION

LEVITICUS 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 (Also Dt 14, 23, Nu 19)

These chapters contain the CODE OF PURIFICATION, in the following categories:

1. Clean and unclean animals (ch. 11);
2. The purification of women after childbirth (ch. 12);
3. Regulations about infectious skin diseases, such as leprosy; also mildew (ch. 13 and 14);
4. Personal uncleanness of men and women (ch. 15).

What was the purpose of the laws of cleanness? This question was much discussed by the rabbis. Concerning the laws of clean and unclean animals, they suggested four possibilities:

1. Opposing cultic misuse by the heathen?
2. To promote hygiene?
3. Symbolic of spiritual truth?
4. An arbitrary test of obedience?

None of these suggestions covers all the circumstances. If the motive was cultic, why was the bull permitted? If it was hygiene, why are these animals permitted as food for us? If symbolism was the goal, why is the symbolism not always clear? Overall the rabbis favored explanation number four, we are to obey God without question. The key seems to be Leviticus 10:10 and 11:44-47. These laws provided object lessons in making distinctions between clean and unclean. Some of them were arbitrary, but the basic principles seem to be that what is normal in a certain situation is clean. For example, fish are the regular creatures of the sea. Other sea creatures are not the norm. Overall, the symbolic interpretation has the most to commend it.

The things mentioned in these chapters refer to “impurities” which have disturbed God’s perfect creation, with instructions as to how these could be regulated so that Israel’s acts of worship would be ceremonially acceptable for fellowship with a holy God. These laws were a constant reminder of how everything in this world lies under the curse of sin, thereby also awakening a longing for redemption from this curse (Ga 3:24; Ro 7:24; Php 3:21).

NOTES:

1. This is not the first time we hear of this distinction between “clean” and “unclean” animals (see the Lord’s directions to Noah in Gn 7!). From earliest times there has existed a *horror naturalis* among all cultures concerning the eating of certain foods. Already in Genesis 9:4 a directive was given to Noah concerning the eating of meat “that has its lifeblood still in it.” These things are a witness to a natural reaction over against the effects of sin, which touched all creation (Ro 8:19-21).

In Leviticus 11 God now regulates this matter of “clean” and “unclean” foods for his people.

- For mammals the criterion was the combination “chews the cud” and “has a split hoof.”
- For sea creatures the norm was fins and scales.
- For birds the birds of prey and the scavengers that fed of the flesh and blood of the dead were excluded. It is easy to see why bats are abnormal.
- Clean insects have jointed legs for jumping.

New Testament passages which show that this “hedge” has been removed for Christians are Acts 10 (Peter and Cornelius); Acts 15:20-21; Col 2:16-17; 1 Tm 4:3-4.

For trivia seekers: in Lv 11:42 the ך in the word גִּחְוֹן (belly) is said to be the middle letter of the Pentateuch! If you are skeptical check it out.

2. In Leviticus 12, which gives regulations pertaining to the cleansing of a woman after childbirth, we are reminded how blood is both a cleanser and a polluter. The double period for cleansing after the birth of a daughter is probably due to the fact that she too would be subject to pollution of blood in her period and childbirth. Note the exception granted to poor people in regard to the sacrifice (v. 8). The fact that Mary and Joseph brought this kind of sacrifice at the birth of Jesus reflects the humble circumstances of Christ's birth (Lk 2:22-24).
3. The infectious skin diseases (נִגַּע צָרַעַת) in need of special cleansing are treated in Leviticus 13. The NIV designation of "infectious disease" is better than the KJV wording "leprosy" since it is more comprehensive. In Greek "leprosy" was not a technical term for Hansen's disease, as it is in contemporary English. Some cases described may be eczema, psoriasis, boils, etc. Not all the diseases described can be identified.
4. Leviticus 15 deals with bodily discharges, both those normally associated with childbirth as well as those caused by diseases. In some cases sexually transmitted diseases may have been involved.

LEVITICUS 16

The various propitiatory institutions of the first 15 chapters of Leviticus reach their highest development in the solemn ceremonies of the great DAY OF ATONEMENT, referred to as the "Good Friday of the Old Testament."

The penitential character of the day was indicated in the fasting of the people (v. 29 and 31), the only fasting required in the Torah, and by the plain linen vestments of the High Priest in place of his usual elaborate robes of office.

In addition to the regular sin offerings at the altar the atonement by blood was to be made at the *Kapporeth*, first with the blood of a bull for the sins of Aaron and his house, then with the blood of one of the goats for the people.

Then followed the ceremony of the "Scapegoat." The High Priest confessed upon it the sins of all the people, and then sent it away into the wilderness. This was not so much another symbol of atonement, but rather of absolution (Ps 103:12, Mi 7:19).

This ceremony provides the background for the New Testament description of Christ as the great High Priest, and of his sacrifice "once for all" (He 7:26f; 9:12, 26, 28; 10:10; 1 Pt 3:18). The scapegoat is a type of the Savior who was "made sin for us" (2 Cor 5:21) and as the one "that takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29).

In the light of Hebrews 9 we can say that Leviticus 16 can be designated as "the pinnacle of the Old Testament sacrificial system" (*Wycliffe Bible Comm.*, p. 96).

The Hebrew word for "scapegoat" is "Azazel" (עֲזָאזֵל). It occurs only in this chapter. It appears to be a combination of two words אֵזֶל and עָז (goat + send/remove). The contraction to one word, Azazel,

which was interpreted as a name for Satan, was probably a late development. “Scapegoat” (escape goat) seems to have been a coinage of the great English translator Tyndale. The main interpretations of *azazel* are “goat of removal,” “for destruction,” “to the precipice,” and “to Satan.” The first seems most likely to be the original meaning. The others are later interpretive rendering that are guesses based on the context. The important point is that the rite of the scapegoat symbolized the act of absolution, whereby the sinner is declared to be free from sin because his sins are removed through the work of him, who was made sin for us.

This concludes the laws and institutions that were provided to keep open access to the throne of grace. The next series (Leviticus 17 to 25) sets forth the demands made by the holiness of God upon his people, that they might remain in fellowship with him and also rejoice in his blessings of grace.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Lv 8-15)

1. What did God wish to impress upon the people of Israel through the elaborate rituals connected with the ordination of the priests? What is the purpose of present-day ordination services?
2. Which different types of sacrifices were used in connection with the ordination of Aaron and his sons?
3. How did the LORD express his presence and approval at this occasion?
4. How did he soon after this give a stern warning that he was opposed to any kind of self-willed service on the part of the priests? What warning lies in this for us today?
5. Which code emphasized that the LORD wanted his people to be holy in their approach to him?
6. Of what general truth was the purification code a constant reminder?
7. From this code:
 - a. which kinds of animals and fish that were edible.
 - b. which kinds of birds were inedible?
 - c. for how many days was a woman ceremonially unclean after giving birth to a boy? to a girl?
 - d. what kind of offering was required of a poor family after the woman’s days of purification were over? Who followed this law?
 - e. what practical purpose did laws pertaining to infectious skin disease also serve? Of which NT story does this remind us?
 - f. what other kinds of impurities needed special cleansing?

FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

The Great Day of Atonement

1. Which animals were sacrificed on the Day of Atonement:
 - a. for the sins of the priest?
 - b. for the sins of the people?
2. Which type of blood-sacrifice was used for this? Describe the blood ritual.
3. On the basis of He 7:26f; 9:12, 26-28; 10:10; 1 Pe 3:18 show how this was a shadow of things to come.

4. Describe the scapegoat ritual. What did it symbolize?
5. On the basis of 2 Cor 5:21 show how this, too, was a shadow of Christ.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Leviticus: Lessons in Sacred Silhouettes, a seven-lesson powerpoint Bible class by Daniel Habben.

The three powerpoints on priests, clean and unclean, and the Day of Atonement.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN THE HOLINESS CODE CONCLUSION (Lv 17-27)

PART III – THE HOLINESS CODE

LEVITICUS 17, 18, 19, 20

These chapters introduce the HOLINESS CODE, summed up as follows: Israel is not to walk in the way of the heathen, but in the ordinances of the LORD. The emphasis shifts from how Israel is to present itself to God to how Israel is to walk before God in holiness of living.

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Leviticus 17 gives directions for the layman’s part in sacrifice. All sacrificial animals must be brought to the priest and killed at the door of the tabernacle. Sacrifice anywhere else was an offense. All idolatrous practices are strictly prohibited (17:1-9).

All eating of blood is prohibited under penalty of being “cut off.” Blood is reserved for sacrifice. “For the life of a creature is in the blood” and “it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life” (17:1-14).

Eating anything that was not killed in a “kosher” way by the draining of the blood produced uncleanness (17:15-16).

Included in Leviticus 17 and the following chapters are dire threats directed toward those who violate the sanctity of life. A general threat which occurs repeatedly is that the offender will be “cut off from his people.” This is the same threat used in the case of those who do not observe the rite of circumcision (Gn 17:14). We remember in this connection what happened to Moses in Exodus 4:24-26. Commentators therefore point out that this expression denotes not only rejection from the nation tantamount to banishment or excommunication, but if not corrected, the offense may end in death, whether by a direct judgment from God, or an untimely death under the providence of God. In some cases it seems to refer to the punishment of death inflicted by the congregation or the magistrates. Even when the pronouncement by magistrates of punishment by being “cut off from the people” did not lead directly to a death penalty, the psychological effect of this threat must have been devastating.

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Leviticus 18 defines and forbids unlawful sexual relations. Though it is not the purpose of this chapter to establish forbidden degrees for marriage, indirectly it does so. Is this moral law? The Canaanites were judged for violating these principles. Paul condemns the incest at Corinth as offensive even to Gentiles.

Verse 16 does not conflict with the levirate marriage of Dt 25:5. The reference here is to a living brother’s wife as also in Leviticus 20:21. The note of the NIV Study Bible is not well founded.

In verse 22 homosexuality is not only prohibited, but closely allied to other sexual perversions, such as having relations with an animal (bestiality) (v. 23).

Note the repeated statement: “I am the LORD” (v. 5; 6; 21).

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Leviticus 19 gives the name to this entire section as the “Holiness Code.” In v. 1 God says to his people: “Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.” The Wycliffe Commentary calls this “one of the greatest chapters in the Old Testament” and “a Mosaic anticipation of the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount.” The refrain is repeated: “I am the LORD.” These regulations emphasize the sanctification of a normal secular life.

Verse 18 contains the summary of the second table of the Law, quoted by Jesus in Mark 12:31: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

This is quite a diverse collection. Some repeated themes are just treatment of the neighbor, concern for the poor, and warning against idolatrous practices. In this course, these themes are considered under various topical studies.

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Chapter 20 of Leviticus sets forth the punishments for sins which violate the sanctity of national life especially in regard to the 1st and 6th commandments. These punishments are very severe (“cut off,” “put to death,” “will die childless,” etc.).

Verses 22 to 27 of this chapter bring to a close the Holiness Code’s regulations as these apply to the people in general.

These four chapters (17-20) apply to the nation as a whole in its normal, secular life. The people were to be holy because Yahweh, their God, was holy. They were a people set apart from the other nations of this world. They were the nation of his possession.

We find a striking parallel between this situation and ours as Christians. We are encouraged in the New Testament to live as God’s holy people in a life of sanctification. Justification has as its fruit a life of sanctification, a life of dedication to God as his chosen possession.

LEVITICUS 21, 22, 23, 24

The HOLINESS CODE continues as it applies to the sanctity of all institutions of worship.

Chapter 21 applies to the priests, their conduct in general (1-6), their marriage (7-15), and their wholeness from bodily defects (16-24).

Chapter 22 emphasizes the sanctity of things sacrificed, regulating the persons and the manner of their consumption and the necessary quality of animals acceptable for sacrificial purposes.

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Chapter 23 provides a list of those festivals at which sacred assemblies were held: Passover/Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles. (More details concerning these festivals are found in Numbers 28 and 29 and in Deuteronomy 16.) The Feast of Tabernacles receives its name from the booths in which the people of Israel were to live for seven days each year after they entered the Promised Land, in remembrance of their way of life in the wilderness.

For more information see *Leviticus: Lessons in Sacred Silhouettes*, a seven-lesson powerpoint Bible class

by Daniel Habben and the seasons and festivals powerpoint.

Chapter 24 relates to the oil and bread set before the Lord (Bread of the Presence – confer Ex 27).

It also brings the second historical incident recorded in the book of Leviticus (v. 10-14). One of the “mixed multitude,” the son of an Israelite woman, quarreled with an Israelite. He blasphemed the Lord’s name. The Name (יהוה – v. 11 and v. 16) is here used κατ’ ἐξοχήν for the tetragrammaton יהוה. It was this passage that gave rise to the law among the Rabbis against even uttering this name Yahweh, the name in which God manifested his person and nature as the God of the Covenant. In v. 20 the *lex talionis* is again mentioned (confer Ex. 21:23f).

LEVITICUS 25

The institution of a jubilee year in this chapter corresponds to the institution of the Day of Atonement in chapter 16. Just as the sins of the whole congregation were to be wiped away by the all-embracing expiation on the Day of Atonement, so also the dislocations of property were to be removed by the Year of Jubilee, and the kingdom of Israel brought back to its original condition.

The Year of Jubilee preserved the Lord’s principle that “the land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine, and you are aliens and tenants” (v. 23).

Provisions for redemption of land (קנין) are made through a kinsman-redeemer (גואל), a right exercised by Boaz in the book of Ruth, a pre-figure of Christ as our Redeemer on the cross. Actually every “purchase” became simply a “lease” until the Year of Jubilee. Thus the Lord set up regulations which would prevent an accumulation of wealth, and also preserve the allocation of land to families. The Year of Jubilee also served to limit slavery so far as the people of the theocracy were concerned. Here the principle applied that Israelites were servants of the Lord and not to be sold permanently (v. 42). Slaves were to come from other nations (v. 44).

It is not sure whether or not the Year of Jubilee was ever completely put into practice (see Is 5:8; Am 2:6). In Isaiah 61:1-3 it is used as a type of the spiritual deliverance which was to be inaugurated by the coming of Messiah. The Lord Jesus applies this prophecy to himself in Luke 4:17-21. The Sabbath and Jubilee rest, of course, pictures the eternal rest, freedom, and blessedness of that heavenly kingdom, prepared as an everlasting inheritance before the foundation of the world (Ac 3:19-20; Ro 8:19ff; Mt 25:34; Col 1:12; 1 Pe 1:4).

That Israel often failed to comply with the provisions of this chapter is clear from Jeremiah 34:8-17. Moses prophesies as much in Leviticus 26:34 (see 2 Chr 36:21).

It is disputed whether the Jubilee Year is a year unto itself or a portion of the 49th or 50th year.

See the seasons and festivals powerpoint.

LEVITICUS 26 (Also Dt 27-28)

Just as the Book of the Covenant in its fundamental principles (Ex 20:1 to 23:19) concluded with promises and threats (Ex 23:2-33), so also these spiritual regulations of the Covenant close with blessings promised to faithful observance and curses pronounced upon transgression of them. These promises and threats anticipate the time when Israel will have entered their inheritance in Canaan, and are therefore

prophetic in nature.

We note that obedience brings with it a promise of outward blessing (26:3-13), and contempt for the law results in sickness, crop failure, and eventual desolation by Israel's enemies (26:14-33). Unfortunately these dire threats of disruption were literally fulfilled (compare 26:27 with 2 Kgs 6:28-29).

The purpose of such divine judgments would be that with Israel's desolation the land would finally enjoy its sabbath rest (26:34), and those remaining would be led to true repentance. The Lord then promises that he would not forget the covenant made with Abraham (26:40-45).

With Leviticus 26:46 the book is formally concluded, and with it the covenant legislation from Exodus 25 onwards: "These are the decrees, the laws and the regulations that the Lord established on Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelites through Moses."

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LEVITICUS 27 (Nu 30)

This chapter, containing directives pertaining to the making of vows, is in the opinion of some an appendix to the book, since "vows formed no integral part of the covenant laws, but were a freewill expression of piety ... and which really lay outside the law, though it was necessary to bring them into harmony with the demands of the law upon Israel" (KD, p. 479). According to a principle expressed in Dt 23:22-24 it was not a sin to refrain from making vows. But every vow, once made, was to be kept. Neglect to do so required atonement, according to the situation itself.

Perhaps the reason for placing the chapter here is that it follows immediately on the vows of the Lord. The thought of "making a vow to dedicate persons to the Lord by giving equivalent values" is rather difficult for us to understand (v. 1-8). The only explanation offered is making a vow to the Lord to dedicate one's own person, or a portion of one's property, to the Lord for averting some danger or distress.

In such a case the fulfillment of the vow "could only have consisted in the payment into the sanctuary the price fixed by law" (KD, p. 480). This is not to be confused with the case of a vow dedicating a Nazirite to the service of the Lord.

In the case of the vow pertaining to an animal, two understandings are possible. The first is that no redemptions were possible for sacrificial animals. Only unclean animals could be redeemed. The other interpretation is that no substitutions were possible for sacrificial animals, but they could be redeemed with a penalty.

In verse 28 the expression "devotes" is used. The NIV footnote briefly explains the meaning of the "*cherem*" (חֵרֵם of חֵרֵם) as "the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the Lord, often by totally destroying them." The book of Joshua will have much more to say about this, where the Lord required entire cities to be totally destroyed because they were "devoted to the Lord" (Jos 6:17).

The book of Leviticus closes with the law concerning the tithe, or tenth part of produce and flock, which "is holy to the Lord" (v. 30-33).

The concluding formula (v. 34) attaches these laws to the law given at Sinai.

SUMMARY – LEVITICUS

The book of Leviticus is identifiable with the word HOLINESS. Either the word itself or concepts relating to it recur throughout the book.

The Sacrificial Code serves as a constant reminder to God's people how their covenant relationship with the LORD, broken by sin, can be restored by the shedding of blood through sacrifices.

The Purification Code serves as a constant reminder of how everything in this world lies under the curse of sin and is in need of purification.

The Holiness Code sets forth how the LORD's holy people should demonstrate their covenant relationship in holiness of living.

“Be holy, because I, the LORD your God, am holy,” is the theme of Leviticus (19:1).

Well could Moses sing: “Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? ... Majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling” (Ex 15:11-13).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Lv 17-27)

1. What is the fundamental difference of purpose between the Purification Code and the Holiness Code?
2. Discuss the interpretation of the threat: “He must be cut off from his people.”
3. Which verse in the Holiness Code gives it its name? Which verse in this code summarizes the entire second table of the law?
4. Explain Leviticus 18:16 in the light of the Levirate (Dt 25:5).
5. What prevented a priest from officiating? What made a sacrifice unacceptable?
6. Give in sequence the chief festivals of the Israelite church year.
7. What was the chief purpose of the Sabbatical and the Jubilee Years? Show how Jesus applied the Year of Jubilee to himself (cf. Is 61:1-3; Lk 4:17-21).
8. How were legal covenants usually brought to a close in those days? Explain how the threats of Leviticus 26 were literally fulfilled.
9. Summarize the purpose of each of the three codes of Leviticus for Israel. Is there any application of these codes to ourselves in New Testament times? Explain.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS; ORGANIZATION (Nu 1-4)

The fourth book of Moses, called **וַיְדַבֵּר** (“and he spoke”) or **בְּמִדְבָּר** (“in the wilderness”) in Hebrew, *Ἀριθμοί* in the Septuagint, and *Numeri* in the Vulgate, tells of the journey of Israel from Mount Sinai to the border of the land of Canaan. It takes in the period from the second to the fortieth year after the exodus from Egypt.

In Leviticus we heard of the regulations pertaining to Israel’s spiritual life. From the practical standpoint, however, Israel still had much to learn concerning what it meant to trust entirely in the LORD. They also had to receive the laws and ordinances relating to their civil and political organization.

We can compare the vast multitude of Israelites of over 2 million people (over 600,000 men) to an army (**צְבָאָה**, Nu 1:3), an army of God, requiring a tremendous amount of organization and discipline to make such a long journey through the wilderness. We therefore speak of the book of Numbers under the theme:

THE MARCH OF GOD’S ARMY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

- I. The Organization of God’s Army in Preparation for the Journey (ch. 1:1-10:10; ca. 1 mo.)
[See esp. 1:1 and 10:11]
- II. The Journey from Sinai to the Second Gathering at Kadesh (ch. 10:11-19:22; ca. 38 yrs.)
[See esp. 10:11 and 20:1, probably beginning of the fortieth year]
- III. The Journey from Kadesh to the Plains of Moab, Preparations for the Conquest of Canaan (ch. 20:1-36:13; ca. 1 yr.) [See esp. 20:1; 33:37f; and 14:34]

Again the unified structure of the book, which for us bears testimony to its Mosaic authorship, doesn’t discourage those who wish to advance their documentary hypothesis. They point to similar stories in Numbers 11 and Exodus 16 (quail) and Numbers 20 and Exodus 17 (water from rock), claiming these to be different “versions” of the same events. Their theories fail to consider marked differences in these accounts, items which can only apply to the peculiar situations in which they are found. Moreover, they fail to understand the author’s purpose in recording these similar events—people are slow to learn from their errors and as a result, history repeats itself.

Numbers gives us in the main a chronicle of events during Israel’s 38 years of wandering in the wilderness, events which were to prepare Israel for Canaan. In the book we see the severity of God’s judgments upon those who despise him. We also see his gracious deliverance in time of danger.

+ + + + +

NUMBERS, Part I

NUMBERS 1

The opening words of Numbers (“The LORD spoke to Moses”) occur 80 times in the book!

The book derives its name from the census which the LORD ordered taken of the people one month after the erection of the tabernacle. All males above 20 years were to be listed for purposes of service in the army of Jehovah (ch. 1:1-3).

Nine months prior to this, a census had been taken for the purpose of collecting atonement money (Ex 38:25-26). The results of both of these numberings were the same: 603,550. The two censuses were no doubt closely related. The Numbers census perhaps consisted mainly in registering the earlier results into public records “according to their clans and families” (v. 1).

A census was taken 38 years later on the steppes of Moab (ch. 26), which showed a slight decrease in the

total number to 601,730. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb this was a new generation of men 20 years old and upwards.

A breakdown of these numberings shows the following figures. See the comparison of the two censuses at chapter 26.

FIRST CENSUS	
TRIBE	NUMBER
Reuben	46,500
Simeon	59,300
Gad	45,650
Judah	74,600
Issachar	54,400
Zebulun	57,400
Ephraim	40,500
Manasseh	32,200
Benjamin	35,400
Dan	62,700
Asher	41,500
Naphtali	53,400
TOTAL	603,550

The Levites were numbered separately (ch. 1:47). They totaled 22,000 at the first numbering, and 23,000 at the second.

Negative critics dispute these numbers. They argue that so many people could not possibly have lived for any length of time on the Sinai peninsula (not accepting, of course, the miraculous feeding with manna and quail); that so many people could have overwhelmed Canaan quickly (supposing falsely that the tribes of Canaan -- 31 kings! -- were very weak); that so many people could not have crossed the Red Sea in a single night or the Jordan River in a single day (which, if we consider the entire situation, was not impossible at all). Some critics base their argument on the similarity of the Hebrew word for “thousand” (אֶלֶף, pl. אֶלְפִים) with the word for “chief” or “head of a clan” (אֶלֶף). Using the latter meaning, of course, would reduce the figures considerably.

Keil-Delitzsch argues convincingly and at length (Commentary, p. 4-16) that there is no reason to regard these numbers as unrealistic. (See also Archer, p.265-269 and the introduction to Numbers in the *Concordia Study Bible* under the heading “Special Problem.”)

The even numbers in the statistics of each tribe are the result of rounding off the numbers into the “thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens” into which Israel was divided, a plan proposed by Jethro (Ex. 18:21 and 25), (Edersheim, *Bible History*, Vol. 2, p. 145).

NUMBERS 2

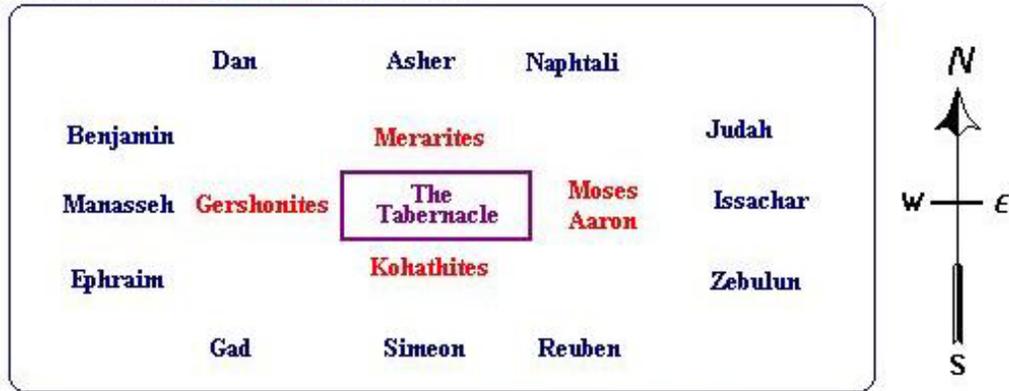
This chapter gives the order of the 12 tribes in the camp and on the march.

In the camp itself the tabernacle was central. Around it three tribes were to camp on each side:

East: Judah, with Issachar and Zebulun (Leah’s sons)

South: Reuben, with Simeon (Leah) and Gad (Zilpah)
 West: Ephraim, with Manasseh and Benjamin (Rachel)
 North: Dan, with Asher and Naphtali (Bilhah and Zilpah)

The Tabernacle In The Wilderness
Order of Camp: Levites Other Tribes



Each tribe encamped under its own standard (v. 34), and they marched in the order given above, with Judah's division leading and Dan's at the rear. Their standards were probably banners or insignia of certain colors, perhaps with a tribal mascot.

Note the concentric circles of holiness that separated a holy God from a sinful people. The LORD dwelt above the *kapporeth* between the cherubim in the Most Holy Place. The shielding curtain and the Holy Place separated that from the outside. The courtyard separated the tabernacle from the Levites. The Levites separated the tabernacle from the other tribes, and the camp encircling the tabernacle separated it from the profane world around them.

NUMBERS 3

This chapter has to do with the Levites, and the Toledoth of Aaron and Moses (v. 1).

According to v. 11 and 12 all the firstborn in Israel were the LORD's, set apart when he struck down all the firstborn in Egypt. But instead of the actual dedication of Israel's firstborn to the LORD's special service, the Levites were to take their place in the ministry of the sanctuary.

Numbers 3:43 tells us that there were 22,273 "firstborn of the Israelites." This must refer only to firstborn since the departure from Egypt. There were, however, only 22,000 Levites to take their places. Thus "redemption money" had to be collected from the people for the remaining 273 Israelites (v. 46-51).

The Levites were arranged into families or clans according to the descendants of the three sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Marari (v. 14-20).

The Gershonites, numbering 7,500, had charge of the coverings and hangings of the tabernacle (v. 21-26). They were to encamp on the west side.

The Kohathites, numbering 8,300 (according to the NIV footnote; the number 8,600 must be due to a

scribal error), took care of the ark and all the sacred vessels of the sanctuary (v. 27-32). Theirs was the south side. The Kohathites included the priests, Aaron and his sons.

The Merarites, numbering 6,200, were to take care of the framework (boards, pillars, etc.) and carry these on the march. Their camp was to the north side (v. 33-37).

Moses and Aaron with the latter's sons, who served as priests, were to encamp to the front of the tabernacle, or the east side (v. 38-39).

NUMBERS 4

The duties of the Levite clans for the march are given in greater detail.

Only Aaron and his sons were allowed to handle the sacred vessels and prepare them for transport. Precise directions for this are given (v. 4-13).

The Kohathites were to carry (not touch!) the holy furnishings after preparation by Aaron and his sons (v. 15-20).

The Gershonites were to carry the hangings and coverings under the direction of Ithamar, son of Aaron (v. 21-28).

The Merarites were to do the heavy work, transporting frames, crossbars, posts and bases for the tabernacle and courtyard, also under Ithamar's direction (v. 29-33).

There were 2,750 Kohathites, 2,630 Gershonites, 3,200 Merarites -- in all 8, 580 Levites from 30 to 50 years of age and fit for service under present laws. (David later on lowered the age from 30 to 20 – 1 Chr 23:24-25).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Intro; Nu 1-4)

1. How does the Masoretic text designate the 4th Book of Moses? Why is this a better designation than the one derived from the LXX?
2. Give the basic outline for the Book of Numbers. Which aspect of Israel's life receives more emphasis in Numbers than in Leviticus? Why?
3. Approximately what time-span is covered in each of the chief parts of Numbers?
4. For what purpose did the numbering take place recorded in Chapter 1? How large was God's army? Which was the largest tribe?
5. Give the arrangement of the Israelite camp with the help of a diagram.
6. Into which three branches were the Levites divided? What were the chief duties of each branch?
7. Why were all Israelite firstborn to be consecrated to the LORD? (Ex 13:1-16)
8. Which Israelite males were now to take the place of all the Israelite firstborn? What adjustment was made to "redeem" the firstborn Israelites who exceeded the number of the Levites?

FOR ADDED CONSIDERATION

In the record of tabulating the male Kohathites a discrepancy occurs in some manuscripts regarding the total number (Nu 3:28 and footnote in NIV).

Why do such discrepancies frequently occur in matters pertaining to numbers in Hebrew manuscripts?

How do some Bible critics try to explain the fact that most OT translations contain “exaggerated totals” in passages which list numbers?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

PROVISIONS FOR PURITY

AND ORDER IN CAMP (Nu 5:1 to 10:10)

NUMBERS 5

This chapter moves from outward organization to regulations designed to keep the camp of the Israelites chaste and clean:

v. 1-4 Those with infectious skin diseases were to remain outside the camp. Extreme cases are cited. Cleanliness of the camp, of course, was essential to Israel's well-being on the journey, but the purpose was also symbolical.

v. 5-10 Those guilty of offenses against fellow humans were required to make restitution. The reparation sacrifice required was the *Asham* (אָשָׁם).

v. 11-31 When a wife was suspected of adultery she was subjected to trial by ordeal (drinking of bitter water made with dust from the tabernacle floor). If guilty, the effects would be manifested in her body. This is Israel's only trial by ordeal.

Although these verses have been compared with pagan ordeal trials (e.g. the *mchape* test for witches in Africa), this process was different in that it was under the direct judgment of God. Note that the accused was presumed to be innocent unless convicted directly by God. It was largely a mechanism for clearing the innocent.

NUMBERS 6

v. 1-21 The Nazirite (note spelling! נַזִּיר) vow is introduced here at the beginning of Israel's life as a nation. To become a Nazirite was voluntary, a vow of special dedication. Such a person was "set apart" (נִזְרָה) unto the LORD. This involved abstaining from intoxicants, from wine and all grape products, not cutting one's hair, and avoiding uncleanness such as contact with a dead body, etc. Provisions for ending the time of special devotion are given. Examples of lifelong dedication are: Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist. Most Nazirite vows were temporary. Occasions for such vows were waiting the birth of a child, some distress or danger, or commitment to completing a mission.

Jesus was a Nazarene, but not a Nazirite.

v. 23-27 The *Aaronic Blessing* brings to a close this sub-section, which gives regulations pertaining to Israel's maintenance of purity of living before God. God places the communication of his blessing in the hands of the priests as a part of their official duty. Its location here makes it a part of the preparation for the hard journey ahead.

יְבָרַכְךָ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ: ²⁴ יֵאָר יְהוָה | פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וַיַּחַנְדְּ: ²⁵

יֵשָׂא יְהוָה | פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם: ²⁶

This blessing is Trinitarian in form and content. Part one conveys the blessing of the God of goodness

and preservation, the God of creation. Part two emphasizes the grace of God in the picture of his shining countenance turned toward mankind in mercy, a revelation of God fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Part three sets forth the blessing of God in the granting of peace, the true peace of heart and mind which comes only through the sending of the Comforter (Jn 14:26f).

NUMBERS 7

This chapter records the presentation of dedicatory gifts by the princes of the tribes of Israel. Chronologically this took place after the tabernacle was set up and sanctified (Lv 8:1-11). It is introduced here because these gifts played a part in the transport of the tabernacle in the desert. It also serves as a response of sorts to the benediction.

Someone has said that reading this and the censuses is about as interesting as reading the telephone book. A more appropriate comparison would be reading the congregation's annual report or stewardship report or its memorial book. Each individual and each gift counts before God.

The wagons and oxen were presented to the Gershonites and Merarites (v. 2-9). The Kohathites were expected to carry the holy things with poles.

On twelve separate days the princes brought identical gifts from each tribe "for the dedication of the altar" (v. 1-88).

Yahweh acknowledged the sanctuary as his very own by speaking to Moses from between the cherubim upon the ark (v. 89).

NUMBERS 8

v. 1-4 Directions are given to set up and light the seven-branched lampstand (menorah). This is a more precise instruction concerning the lampstand's use than that found in Exodus 25. This also serves to introduce the main part of this chapter.

v. 5-22 The Levites are consecrated for their service. Water was used; their bodies were shaved; their garments were washed; bullocks were sacrificed. (This consecration is not the same as the rite of ordination of priests described in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8).

The priests were presented to the LORD "as a wave offering" (v. 11, 13), which meant that they were symbolically conducted to the altar and back again.

The entire service was symbolic of giving the Levites wholly to the LORD, and the LORD gives them back again to serve on behalf of the people.

Here the age of beginning service is placed at 25 years (v. 25), in contrast to the 30 years mentioned previously (ch. 4:3). One explanation for this difference is that Chapter 4 speaks of organizing for transport. Another explanation is that the 5 year differential refers to a sort of 5 year "vicarship" or probationary type of service.

NUMBERS 9

v. 1-5 This chapter begins by reporting the first commemorative celebration of the Passover in the wilderness of Sinai, on the 14th day of the first month of the second year. Chronologically this would

follow the setting up of the tabernacle, which occurred on the 1st day of the first month of the second year, as recorded in Exodus 40:1 and 17.

v. 6-14 Provision is made for a supplementary or “make-up” Passover, for those defiled “because of a dead body” or not able to be present on the regular day. This was to be celebrated on the 14th day of the second month (v. 11). The Passover like the other Mosaic festivals was a **מוֹעֵד**, a festival to be celebrated on an appointed date. Mitigating circumstances, however, could cause a change in date, as long as the change was not the result of negligence or indifference.

v. 15-23 The LORD’s guidance of Israel by means of a cloud, briefly referred to at the close of Exodus (ch. 40:36-38), is here repeated in somewhat greater detail. The repetitive style of reporting this emphasizes the importance of divine guidance and protection on the journey.

NUMBERS 10:1-10

Instructions are given as to how the signals should be given throughout the camp of Israel by means of silver trumpets. A variety of signals indicated convocation, breaking of camp, special feasts, etc.

With these verses the organization for Israel’s march through the wilderness is completed. The next section (ch. 10:11 to 21:35) tells of the march of God’s army itself.

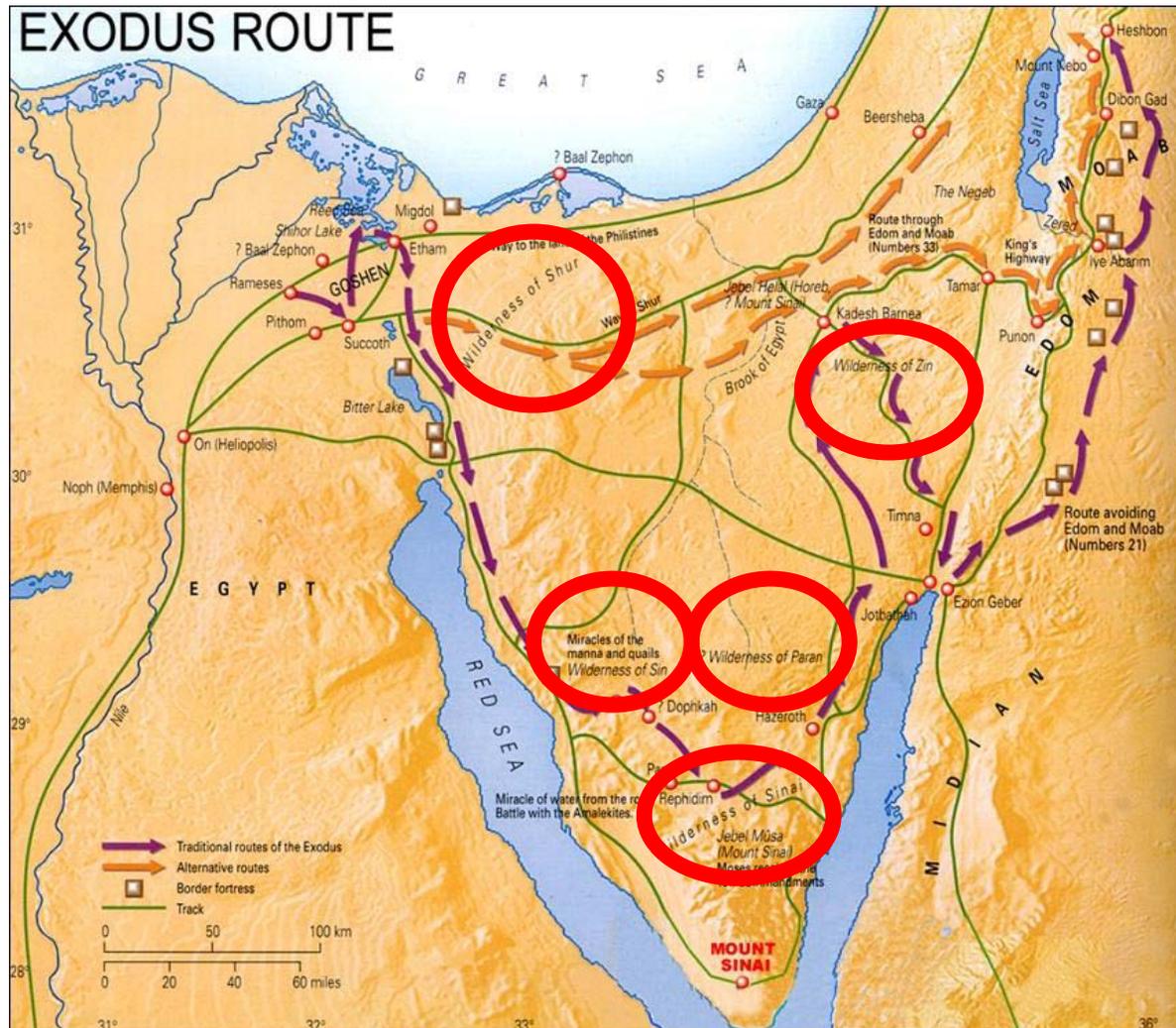
Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury (1228), who divided the Bible into chapters, apparently reckoned this section as beginning with the instructions concerning the trumpet signals.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Nu 5:1 - 10:10)

1. In Numbers 5 certain regulations are introduced pertaining to maintaining cleanliness and order in the Israelite camp. Why are they introduced here?
2. For what purpose was the “trial by ordeal” (Nu 5) held? Why was this introduced at this point?
3. Describe the procedure. How were both husband and wife served by this unusual procedure?
4. Give the main features of the Nazirite law. Which people later served as examples of observance of this law?
5. Outline the Trinitarian interpretation of the Aaronic blessing.
6. Comment on the chronology of Numbers 7 in its placement here.
7. Explain the symbolism involved in presenting a “wave offering” (**תְּנוּפָה**) to the LORD (Ex 29:24; Lv 7:30; 8:27; 10:14 Nu 5:25; 6:20). For what purpose were the Levites to be presented as a wave offering” to the LORD? Picture how this might have been carried out.
8. When was the first celebration of the Passover held after leaving Egypt? Where?
9. Why was provision made for a “supplementary” celebration of this festival?
10. How was the army of God to know when it should break camp?

11. What other signals were prescribed for organizing this vast army for setting out in marching order and for other convocations?

PREVIEW OF THE JOURNEY



The following areas and places play a role in Israel's journeys after Sinai:

AREAS

Paran — Desert area North of Sinai (Nu 10, 12, 13)

Zin — Desert area North of Paran

Arabah — Part of Great Rift Valley South of Dead Sea

Edom — East of Arabah

Moab — East of Dead Sea

Negev — Canaan's Southland, an arid region (Nu 13:22)

PLACES

Taberah — Fire from the LORD (Nu 11:1-2)

Kibroth Hataavah — "Graves of Craving" (Nu 11:4-35)

Hazeroth — Miriam's jealousy (Nu 12)

Ezion Geber — On Red Sea (Gulf of Aqaba)

Kadesh Barnea — Center of Israel's wandering for 38 yrs. (Nu 13:26)

Hormah — "Destruction" Israel's abortive attempt to enter Canaan (Nu 14:45)

CHAPTER SIXTEEN FROM SINAI TO KADESH (Nu 10:11 to Nu 14:45)

NUMBERS, Part II

NUMBERS 10:11-36

v. 12 “Then the Israelites set out ... until the cloud came to rest in the Desert of Paran.” This verse, reporting the beginning of the wilderness march, is a summary statement, anticipating the later arrival in Paran.

v. 14-28 The order of march: Judah, Issachar, Zebulun/(Gershonites and Merarites)/Reuben, Simeon, Gad/(Kohathites)/Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin/Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. Showing the way, of course, was the cloud of the LORD, which hovered above.

v. 29-32 Moses persuades Hobab, his brother-in-law, to serve as guide. That Hobab was persuaded is concluded from Judges 1:16, 4:11, etc., passages which refer to the Kenites, who became a part of Israel later on (1 Chr 2:55) ... That Hobab was requested in addition to God’s supernatural guidance need not conflict. Hobab’s experience with the wilderness could help greatly in things like springs, oases, pastureland, etc.

v. 33 “The ark of the covenant went before them.” This is mentioned here for the first time as carried separately, before the whole army.

v. 35-36 Moses’ prayer “when the ark set out” became a classic prayer, echoed by David in Psalm 68:1 and Psalm 132:8 as an expression of confidence in the LORD of the Church, that he would preserve his people against the attacks of all enemies. This prayer of Moses forms part of the historic Introit for Pentecost Sunday, a fitting text for the Church Militant as it marches forward to the day of fulfillment.

NUMBERS 11

v. 1-3 Israel’s fickle spirit of rebelliousness already begins at Taberah (burning), where God quickly chastises them with fire from heaven. “Grumbling on the way to the Promises Land” quickly becomes a theme of the journey (see 1 Cor 10).

v. 4 “The rabble (רִבְבוֹתָם, the gathered ones, from רָבַץ, to gather) with them began to crave other food ...” The impetus for complaint comes from the mixed crowd which accompanied the Israelites. This is a foreshadowing of the evil influence of the other nations. Sadly, Israel is influenced by the crowd, rather than the other way around.

How could they refer to “free food” in Egypt?

v. 10-15 Moses gives vent to despondent feelings of self-pity, certainly not unnatural in view of Israel’s repeated complaints, which all ended up as his responsibility. One is reminded of similar feelings of Elijah and Jeremiah and spiritual leaders today when their people fail to appreciate the many manifestations of God’s grace and complain at the least bit of adversity.

v. 16-17 The LORD recognizes Moses' burden and relieves it with the assistance of 70 elders (the beginning of the Sanhedrin?). An excellent example to pastors to use the help of consecrated lay-people rather than to feel they have to "go it alone."

v. 18-23 God promises meat "until it comes out of your nostrils." We would say "out of your ears." When Moses expresses amazement at this, the LORD declares: "Is the LORD's arm too short?" An excellent text!

v. 28 Joshua, jealous of the honor of Moses, is unhappy about Eldad and Medad, two of the 70 elders, "prophesying" in the camp. This "prophesying" was no doubt an ecstatic phenomenon, similar to prophetic utterances recorded elsewhere in Scripture (e.g. 1 Sam 19:20ff). Moses' reply shows that he seeks not his own glory, but the glory of his God. See the similar attitude Paul expresses in Philippians concerning the preaching of those who did not support him, but who preached Christ.

The opposing translations of verse 28 depend on whether the verb is **וַיִּסַּף** "add" or **וַיִּסַּף** "stop."

v. 31-34 The LORD this time, according to his promise in v. 20, sent an enormous quantity of quail, enough for a whole month, to put to shame their unbelief and to punish them for their greediness. The effect of their greed was God's judgment. Many died as a result of their craving for other food (*Kibroth Hattavah*: "graves of greediness." Note the meaningful place names given by Israel to significant stops on the journey).

v. 35 "From Kibroth Hattavah the people traveled to Hazeroth and stayed there."

NUMBERS 12

Moses' elevated position arouses envy in the hearts of Miriam, Moses' sister, and also in Aaron, who challenge his leadership. Is the "Cushite" referred to in v. 2 to be identified with Zipporah (Hab 3:7), or had Zipporah died and had Moses taken another wife, a Cushite? Was this their real reason for openly challenging their distinguished brother? Often alleged reasons for complaints and the real reasons are quite different.

In the Bible Cushites are most often black Africans from Sudan, but they also may be an Arab group in the Sinai (Genesis 10:6).

The LORD takes a hand in this situation (v. 4), attesting clearly to Moses' superiority above all prophets. With Moses he speaks "face to face" (v. 8). The priesthood of all believers is not to be used as a pretext against the special call of God.

When the LORD punishes Miriam, who seems to have been the instigator, with leprosy, Moses intercedes for her (v. 13). Aaron as at Sinai seems to be following instead of leading.

v. 3 This verse has been cited by some commentators as a "post-Mosaic" which provides evidence against Mosaic authorship. Others regard it as a "later gloss." It is a simple statement of Moses as "a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth." Would a humble man say this about himself? He might if he was defending his office and not his person. Another solution is to translate "Moses was the most afflicted man," another meaning of **עֲנָה**.

In this chapter the LORD himself raises up Moses as a *primus inter pares* as far as Old Testament

prophets are concerned. What Moses writes here about himself is written without pride. It is a simple statement of fact, declared in a chapter where Moses' leadership is both challenged by others, as well as affirmed by God himself. It reminds one of similar expressions of other leaders chosen by God who also had their authority called into question (1 Cor 15:10).

Israel's journey now takes them on to Paran (v. 16) where Kadesh was located.

NUMBERS 13

v. 1 At God's command the spies are sent out from Kadesh.

v. 3-5 Among the tribal leaders are Caleb, from the tribe of Judah, and Hoshea (later Joshua), from the tribe of Ephraim.

v. 17 Negev: southland, an arid region in the southern district of Canaan, forming a transition from desert to cultivated land.

v. 21 Hamath: in Syria.

v. 33 Nephilim: traditionally translated "giants." Better might be "attackers," "tyrants," "awesome or authoritative ones." The fact of their size is mentioned separately. It is not clear what connection if any there is with Genesis 6:4. Perhaps the only connection is in the imaginations of the Israelites. Elsewhere some of the inhabitants of Canaan are called Anakim and Rephaim (Josh. 11:21; Num. 13:33; Deut. 9:2). The Philistine giants encountered by David and his men seem to be descendants of this group.

The facts of the story itself are well-known. This chapter ends with the split report, with Caleb advocating for the minority to "go up and take possession," and the majority saying, "We can't attack ... We seemed like grasshoppers."

NUMBERS 14

v. 1-10a The effect of the report upon the people is appalling. Except for Joshua and Caleb the people weep, grumble, complain, and openly rebel against the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and are about to stone them.

v. 10b "Then the glory of the LORD appeared ..." KD comments: "The majesty of God flashed out before the eyes of the people in a light which suddenly burst forth from the tabernacle" (p. 92).

v. 13-17 Moses' intercession is again exemplary of a faithful servant. He appeals to Jehovah's honor among the heathen, and his gracious promise of mercy. God's Savior-glory is at stake!

v. 20-28 The LORD promises forgiveness. He will still carry out his work of salvation. Yet not one of those who saw his glory and signs, except for Joshua and Caleb, would see the promised land. For 40 years, corresponding to the 40 days of exploring the land (v. 34), they would wander in the wilderness and die there. Those responsible for the evil report died of a plague (v. 37). The forty years includes the year they spent getting to and living at the foot of Sinai, and the one year they spent getting from Kadesh to the Plains of Moab and the time they spent there at Shittim.

v. 39-45 Presumptuously some still tried to enter, now through unbelief defying God, who had told them to turn back (v. 25). They were routed by the Amelekites and Canaanites in the direction of Hormah, to the north and east of Kadesh.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Nu 10:11-Nu 14:45)

1. Describe the order of march of Israel's tribes and the tabernacle equipment. What was at the head of the entire procession?
2. Who served as guide on the march? Why was he especially suited for this task?
3. Show how Moses' "departure prayer" (Nu 10:35) fits the thought of the traditional Introit for Pentecost Sunday (cf. Ps 68:1; 132:8).
4. What happened at the following places:
 - a. Taberah (ch. 11)
 - b. Kibroth Hataavah (ch. 11)
 - c. Hazeroth (ch. 12)
 - d. Kadesh Barnea (ch. 13)
 - e. Hormah (ch. 14)
5. What points did Moses make in his intercession at Kadesh (Nu 14:13-19)?
6. What does the LORD reveal about himself in his reply to Moses (Nu 14:20)?
7. Read Ps 78:34-41. How is Israel's behavior portrayed? What should the people have learned in all their experiences? Yet how did God remain faithful to his promises?
8. What important lesson lies in all this for us (1 Cor 10:1-13)?

FOR ADDED CONSIDERATION

In Numbers 33 Moses lists the "stages" in Israel's journey. Find the following places on a map and see if you can remember what happened at each place:

Rameses - Succoth - Etham; Pi Hahiroth - Migdol; Marah; Elim; Desert of Sin; Rephidim; Sinai; Kibroth Hataavah; Hazeroth.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN THE THIRTY EIGHT YEARS; ON TO THE PLAINS OF MOAB (Nu 15-21)

In Numbers 14 we are told how all the men over 20 years of age except Joshua and Caleb would not enter the land of Canaan because of their rebellious reaction over against the report of the 12 who explored the land. The chapter ends with the report of how a contingent of Israelites were repulsed at Hormah as they tried to enter Canaan in spite of the LORD's decree.

The chapters which follow (15-19) give us only some brief glimpses of events that happened during the 38 succeeding years. In the first chapter of Deuteronomy, where Moses reviews Israel's history for the people, he simply declares: "And so you stayed in Kadesh many days" (Dt 1:46). In Numbers 33, where Moses lists the "stages in the journey of the Israelites" during their wanderings from Egypt to Canaan, 17 encampments are recorded between Hazeroth and Ezion Geber concerning which we know little or nothing.

The Bible does give us snatches of information here and there pertaining to Israel's wanderings in general. Moses declares that for their entire period of wandering they did not lack anything (Dt 2:7). Manna continued to be their food until they crossed the Jordan River (Jos 5:12). Nehemiah, when recounting Israel's history, also refers to the 40 years in the desert, when in spite of their arrogant and stiff-necked disobedience to God's commands, God continued to lead them with his pillar of cloud and fire, supply food and drink, and even saw to it that "their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen" (Ne 9:16-23). In the Psalms references are made to Israel's waywardness as the LORD tested the people, disciplined them, yet sustained them (Ps 106; 95; 78).

We also know that Israel lived in a state of probation during these years. The Passover was not observed; circumcision was not carried out (Jos 5). Amos 5:25-26 suggests that the Israelites practiced idolatry during this period. Yet as the next few chapters reveal in bits and pieces, the priesthood with Aaron at the head was maintained and the sabbath was observed.

NUMBERS 15

v. 2 "After you enter the land ..." For the purpose of reviving hope for life in the promised land various laws are given anticipating residence in the land. Though they cannot enter the land now, they will enter.

v. 3-21 Quantities of meal to be used when bringing offerings (not specified in Leviticus) are now specified. In Canaan every burnt-offering was to be associated with a meal offering.

v. 22-29 Sins of ignorance (sins of omission) (תַּחַטָּא בְשִׁגָּה) and their expiation are explained.

v. 30-31 Sins of defiance (despising the word of Yahweh) (תַּעֲשֶׂה בְיַד רָמָה) resulted in being "cut off from the people."

v. 32-36 Sabbath-breakers were to be put to death by stoning. This was the LORD's own verdict in the case of a man who gathered wood on the Sabbath day.

v. 37-41 Tassels on the four corners of their garments remind them of the commandments of God.

NUMBERS 16

The rebellion of the company of Korah, recorded in this chapter, is one of the few events related during this 38 year period of wandering. This probably occurred early in this period.

Korah was a Kohathite of the tribe of Levi. The other leaders of the rebellion were of the tribe of Reuben: Dathan, Abiram, and On. With them were 250 tribal leaders. They opposed the authority of Moses and Aaron, apparently claiming that everyone had equal rights under the LORD (v. 3). Korah's opposition, it appears, was directed chiefly against Aaron (v. 11), while the others complained against Moses' leadership (v. 13-14). This rebellion was a misapplication of the priesthood of believers, setting it in opposition to the public ministry.

Note the sharp exchanges as each party throws the words of the other back at them (v. 3, 7, 9, 13). It was agreed that the rebels should take their censers with lighted incense and appear before Yahweh, to see whom the LORD would choose. When the LORD threatens to destroy the rebels, Moses and Aaron intercede (v. 22), since at Korah's instigation the entire congregation assembles. A separation does follow, and Korah's men and their entire households are swallowed up as the earth opens up (v. 31-33). The other 250 leaders are consumed by fire (v. 35). The glory of the LORD (v. 19) is awesome as it executes judgment.

The brazen censers used by the rebels are beaten into covering plates for the altar, as a memorial to perpetuate the exclusive right of Aaron's house to the priesthood (v. 39-40).

When the congregation grumbles about this "harsh judgment," even blaming Moses and Aaron for killing "the LORD's people" (v. 41), they are struck with a plague. In spite of Aaron's mediating offering of incense, 14,700 men perish (v. 46-49). The mediation, however, did bring about an end to the sad affair.

The entire rebellion is a sordid example of simple jealousy against God's appointed leadership. Korah as one of the Kohathites felt that his family should have a larger part in the priestly leadership. The descendants of Reuben resented the preeminence of Moses. Was not Reuben the firstborn of Jacob? What right did Moses, the Levite, have to his position of leadership? One can see how the other 250 disgruntled leaders could be influenced by this spirit of opposition.

Actually this rebellion against God's leaders was tantamount to rebellion against God, who chooses weak mortals to do his work, and does so as a matter of his judgment. The LORD's action in this case – showing forth his glory in a sudden, direct act of judgment – demonstrates his seriousness about this. This should also serve as a warning not to despise those whom the LORD has called through his church today as his leaders, men who are divinely chosen and to be respected as such.

Moses and Aaron's act of mediation by means of burning incense has been compared with Christ's mediatorial intercession as our High Priest. Edersheim declares: "Never before or after was the Gospel so preached under the Old Testament as when Aaron, at Moses' direction, took the censer, and, having filled it from the altar, 'ran into the midst of the assembly' and 'offered the incense and made atonement' for the people" (*Bible History*, Vol. II, p. 182). Edersheim compares this incident with the lifting up of the bronze serpent, which represented another part of the Redeemer's work.

It should also be mentioned here that not all of Korah's sons died in this rebellion (Nu 26:11). In fact, Samuel was a descendant of Korah (1 Sm 1:1; 1 Chr 6:33-38), and many Psalms were written by "the sons of Korah" (Ps 42; 44-49; 84; 85; 87; 88). These Psalms glorify especially the beauty of the services of the LORD's sanctuary.

NUMBERS 17

Aaron's high-priestly office is further substantiated by direct action of the LORD in the incident of the flowering rod, which in Aaron's case not only sprouted, but bore blossoms and mature almonds! A man's rod in those days was the symbol of his position. Aaron's rod sprouted and bore fruit, whereas the rods of other tribal leaders remained barren, because Aaron administered his office in the full power of Yahweh's Spirit (v. 1-9).

Aaron's rod was then preserved in the sanctuary before the ark (v. 10; also He 9:4). The effect upon the people was to awaken within them an awe-filled, even fearful reaction within their midst (v. 12-13).

NUMBERS 18

The duties and responsibilities of the priests (v. 1-7), as well as their revenues and blessings (v. 8-30), are further defined. To serve God publicly is a great gift, which brings with it great responsibility. Again the Levites are mentioned as the peculiar possession of Yahweh (v. 20). Although they were to receive no tribal territory, the tithe of all Israel's inheritance was to be theirs. The Levites were to tithe of their tithe (v. 26).

NUMBERS 19

This chapter relates the ceremonial procedure required for purification from the uncleanness of death.

First of all the "water of uncleanness" (מֵי נִדְהָה) was to be prepared. Briefly, Eleazar, the son of Aaron, was to oversee the slaying of a blemish-free red heifer. He was to sprinkle its blood toward the tabernacle seven times and then burn it entirely with its blood, cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet cloth. The resultant ashes were to be used to make the "water of uncleanness," translated "water of cleansing" (NIV). This was the water to be used for removing ceremonial impurity in the cases of those defiled by the dead (v. 1-10).

Rules and regulations pertaining to the use of this water as a means of purification for those who touched a dead body follow (v. 11-22).

The putrefaction caused by death was regarded as the embodiment of sin. It was a result of man's fall into sin. The rites prescribed here point to the use of blood as a powerful antidote to the corruption brought on by death. In the ceremony the sprinkling of water was also employed in order to remove uncleanness brought on by death.

This water of purification is used in the New Testament as an analogy to the spiritual purification through the blood of Christ and to the water of baptism (He 1:3; 9:13f; 10:19 and 22).

What follows in the next chapters occurs after the 38 years of more or less aimless wandering.

NUMBERS 20

This chapter records a number of significant events, particularly the sin of Moses for which he was to be denied entrance into Canaan as Israel's leader.

v. 1 "In the first month the whole Israelite community arrived at the Desert of Zin, and they stayed at Kadesh."

It is important to note here that this record begins in the 39th or 40th year of Israel's wanderings. This is clear from what immediately follows, and that is the death of Aaron at Mount Hor (v. 22), which according to Numbers 33:38 took place "on the first day of the fifth month of the fortieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt." (See also Israel's complaint in Numbers 20:3-5).

For our purposes it is important to bear in mind that what happens at Meribah as recorded in this chapter takes place before a new generation of Israelites. Other than Joshua and Caleb, only Moses, Miriam, and Aaron are left of the "old guard." Psalm 78 combines incidents from Exodus and Numbers showing how history repeated itself.

Miriam's death and burial are recorded.

v. 11-12 "Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff." Why was this sin serious enough to bar Moses' entrance into the promised land? The LORD himself gives the answer: "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me ..." Moses' emphasis shifted from the LORD to "we."

We must remember that Moses is here dealing with a new generation of Israelites, people who knew of the wonders of the LORD only by word of mouth. God wanted Moses to glorify Yahweh's grace before them. Instead, Moses chides the people as rebels, and smites the rock in anger instead of speaking to it as the LORD commanded.

Moses uses law instead of gospel. He acts in weakness rather than in confidence. Aaron complied. Both acted unworthily of their office. Neither was to enter the promised land (compare 27:12-14; Dt 32:48ff). To whom much is given, of him much is required (Lk 12:48; cf. also Ps 106:32-33).

v. 14-21 Moses sends messengers to the king of Edom (according to Judges 11:17 also to the king of Moab) for permission to pass through. The "king's highway," was a caravan route from Damascus to Arabia which led through Edom and Moab via the mountains and which had more wells than the desert route. . Permission is refused, and the king threatens with a large army, so Israel turns away. Deuteronomy 2:4-8 gives another account of this event.

v. 22-29 Aaron's Death at Mount Hor. As Edersheim comments (p. 190), there is "a solemn grandeur" about the narrative. In full priestly dress and in the sight of all the people Aaron walks to his burial. There is no farewell. Solemnly Eleazar is invested as Aaron is divested. Then Aaron is "gathered to his people." Concerning what passed between Moses, Aaron, and Eleazar no more is said. (According to ch. 33:39 Aaron died at age 123.)

NUMBERS 21

v. 1-3 The Canaanite king Arad attacks the Israelites, leading to a vow: "If you (the LORD) will deliver these people ... we will totally destroy their cities." The verb "totally destroy" is from the Hebrew **הָרַם** which in the Hiphil means "devote to the LORD" in the sense of destroying utterly. (Keil interprets v. 3 as having taken place under Joshua later on, in fulfillment of this vow – Jdg 1:17; Jos 12:14. Others such as Roehrs, Wycliffe Com. etc., assume that Israel's battle against Arad took place at this time.)

It is not certain if this Arad is located at the same site as the large Early Bronze Age city of Arad.

v. 4-9 The Bronze Snake.

Refused passage through Edom, Israel marched south to another arm of the Red Sea, i.e. the Gulf of

Aqaba. This meant going through the deep depression of the Arabah, an intensely hot, desolate region, no doubt adding to the people's discouragement.

Again complaints bring severe judgment. The LORD uses an existing danger, poisonous snakes found in large numbers in this region, to punish. The story itself takes on its full significance in the light of the fulfillment of the Bronze Snake as a type of Christ (Jn 3:14f). The symbol of divine help appears in the likeness of the agency of destruction (Ro 8:3; 2 Cor 5:21).

In Hezekiah's time the Bronze Snake had become an object of superstitious veneration, and Hezekiah destroyed it. This means that it was preserved by Israel in some way until that time (2 Kgs 18:4).

v. 14 "Book of the Wars of the LORD." A collection of songs of victory from the time of Moses, sung in celebration of the LORD's glorious acts. Some believe it was the same as or was incorporated into the Book of Jasher.

v. 21-35 Defeat of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan.

Because of a promise to Lot to spare his descendants, the Moabites and Ammonites (Dt 2:18-19), the Israelites pass around the land of Moab. The Amorite king Sihon, however, had previously conquered the northern part of Moab, between the Arnon and the Jabbok Rivers, and so after he refuses Israel safe passage, the LORD commands Israel to make war on this Canaanite nation, one of those ripe for extermination (Gn 15:16).

Israel's glorious conquest over Sihon and his city Heshbon inspired poets to the songs of victory recorded here (v. 27-30). It is debated whether v 27-29 are an Israelite poem or an Amorite poem about their earlier victories.

Jahaz and Edrei were pivotal victories that had a role in Israel's history like Lexington and Concord or the Battle of Bunker Hill in American history.

The kingdom of Og embraced the northern half of Gilead. (Moses recounts these victories in greater detail in Dt 2 and 3.) These victories gave Israel control of the whole country east of Jordan.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Nu 15-21)

1. Although we know little about Israel's activities during the "many days" spent at Kadesh, we do have bits of information concerning some aspects of their life. What do we know about:
 - a. their source of food and clothing?
 - b. their number of encampments?
 - c. their religious observances?
2. What purpose did their years of seemingly aimless wandering serve?
3. How did the LORD continue to give the people hope that they would eventually enter the land of Canaan?
4. From which tribes of Israel did the leaders of a rebellion against Moses and Aaron arise? Why from these tribes?

5. In what way did the LORD himself execute judgment against the rebels?
6. What practical application for us lies in this unfortunate incident?
7. What mediatorial role did Moses and Aaron play in this rebellion?
8. How did God himself substantiate Aaron's high-priestly authority?
9. What function was performed by the use of the ashes of a red heifer? Why was some special type of cleansing-regulation needed at this time?
10. With what does the writer of Hebrews (1:3; 9:13f; 10:19; 10:22) by analogy compare this water of purification?
11. Describe Moses' act of disobedience at Meribah. Why did the LORD pass such a strict judgment upon his faithful leader? (See also Ps 106:32-33).
12. Describe Aaron's unusual death soon after this. At what age did Aaron die?
13. Why was Israel forced to make another major detour on its way to Canaan? What dramatic incident happened soon after? Explain its significance in the light of the New Testament.
14. Which two kingdoms East of Jordan did Israel conquer? Which peoples were spared for the time being? Why? Which area did Israel now control?

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

1. Locate on the map the following countries:
 - a. Edom
 - b. Moab
 - c. Bashan
2. Which four river canyons lie east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea?
3. Between which rivers does the land of Moab lie?
4. Which Canaanite tribe did Israel conquer in order to control the land East of the Jordan? Which two kings?



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN ON THE PLAINS OF MOAB (Nu 22-25)

NUMBERS< PART III

NUMBERS 22

Israel was now encamped at a place called Shittim (Acacia) (ch. 25:1), located in the plains of Moab near where the Jordan empties into the Salt Sea. Before crossing the Jordan into Canaan proper, however, preparations had to be made. For one thing, Israel had to learn that the heathen nations were not only dangerous to them politically, but that their very beliefs and way of life were totally at variance with their own. This constituted Israel's greatest danger. This is brought out in the story of Balak, king of Moab, who summons Balaam, a celebrated soothsayer from Mesopotamia, to weaken Israel with his magical curses.

Aramaic texts have been found at Deir Alla in the Jordan Valley that refer to Balaam son of Beor, but they are too fragmentary to provide much information. They date from much later than the historical Balaam and may have been brought by Aramaic-speaking settlers moved there by the Assyrians.

There are many opinions concerning the beliefs of Balaam, from wizard compelled by God to bless against his will, to true prophet who fell victim to covetousness. There is more truth to the first view than the second. He was undoubtedly a heathen fortuneteller, but with a certain knowledge of the true God and also with a fear of his power. Seeing an opportunity to increase his powers through the God of Israel, Balaam sought an alliance with Yahweh, just as Simon Magus and the exorcists in Ephesus did (Acts 8:13, Acts 19:3-16). Balaam's utterances in this story, however, were prophecies from the Spirit of God. His knowledge of Yahweh, reflected in his prophecies, shows that the great things done by God for Israel had been reported as far as Mesopotamia. The New Testament comments that Balaam "loved the wages of wickedness" (2 Pe 2:15). Like Simon Magus, his "heart was not right," because it was divided. Not able to oppose the will of Yahweh, he at the same time did not turn to him wholeheartedly, and eventually gave evil advice against Israel, which brought on his destruction.

v. 7-14 Balaam's first interview with the delegation from Balak shows that he has a knowledge of Yahweh. Not wishing to displease God, he refuses. He does show some hesitation, however, by asking the people to stay the night.

Note that in v. 7 the elders of Moab and Midian hire Balaam for purposes of "divination" (from **קִסָּם** – prophesy falsely). Nowhere is Balaam referred to as a true prophet (**נְבִיא**).

v. 15-20 This time the delegation brings richer promises. Balaam knows he can't oppose Yahweh. Yet his desire for gain causes him to temporize. The LORD gives limited permission, having his own purposes in mind.

v. 22 "But God was very angry," not necessarily that Balaam went, but because of Balaam's avaricious attitude in going – which becomes clear as the story progresses. The Hebrew participle here suggests the translation: "God's anger was kindled as he was going."

Through the manifestation of an angel to the donkey God did not want to prevent Balaam from going, as some critics maintain (seeing a "contradiction" here in God's advice and subsequent action). He wanted to warn Balaam concerning his false attitude of heart and the destruction to which this was leading.

v. 28 “Then the LORD opened the donkey’s mouth ...” Bible scoffers often refer to this “irrational” occurrence, claiming that Balaam shows no surprise concerning the donkey’s ability to speak, which is in itself “incredible.” It is obvious from the story itself, however, that Balaam lost all self-control, and so “God made a donkey serve as a soothsayer’s teacher” (John Calvin).

v. 38 “I must speak only what God puts in my mouth.” Balaam tells Balak a half-truth.

For the biblical application of this story see 2 Pe 2:10-16.

NUMBERS 23, 24

Balaam uttered prophetic statements on a number of occasions and from different places. Edersheim calls them “parables.” The NIV and the Wycliffe Commentary refer to them as “oracles.” The Hebrew term is Mashal (מָשָׁל), meaning “proverbial saying,” written in poetic form, the same term used for “wisdom literature.”

First Oracle (Ch. 23:7-10) — Theme: Israel Is a Specially Chosen People

This saying stresses especially Israel as “a people who live apart,” inwardly and outwardly separated from the other nations. Such a people, so peculiarly a people of God, Balaam could not curse. On the contrary, he could only wish his death could be like that of a righteous Israelite. (Note: v. 10b has frequently been used as a funeral text.)

As long as Israel maintained its separate identity as Yahweh’s covenant people, the people enjoyed God’s blessing.

Second Oracle (Ch. 23:18-24) — Theme: The LORD Is the Strength of His People

This was spoken at another vantage point, where the entire camp of Israel could be seen. Balaam speaks the familiar words: “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind.” The LORD is the source of his people’s strength. His covenant-presence can overcome all evil. Note especially Balaam’s words in 23:21: “The shout of the King is among them.”

Third Oracle (Ch. 24:3-9) — Theme: Israel Will Enjoy Special Blessings

A third locality – a ridge farther north – is tried in desperation. Again there are seven altars and sevenfold sacrifices, but no auguries this time. The Spirit of God comes upon him, and Balaam speaks in an ecstatic condition. He prophesies Israel becoming a beautiful, powerful kingdom. He closes with a reference to Israel as “a lion” (see “Lion of Judah” – Re 5:5), with a special blessing (24:9).

Fourth Oracle (Ch. 24:15-19) — Theme: The Messiah Will Arise Out of Israel

We don’t wonder that Balak becomes violently angry and advises Balaam to return home! But before Balaam returns, he must deliver a message which pertains to “the latter days” or “days to come” (NIV, v. 14). This points definitely to the future, and is an expression with a definite Messianic import (see Gn 49:1).

Thereupon follows the familiar prophecy: “A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel ...” This prophecy is identified with the coming of the Savior (Mt 2:2; Re 22:16). Did the “wise men from the East,” know this text?

Final Oracles (Ch. 24:2-24)

The final sayings of Balaam foretell the destruction of the Amalekites, descended from a grandson of Esau (v. 20), and also the Kenites, relatives of Moses who served as guides, who would be destroyed by Asshur (v. 21-22). The last words of Balaam refer to “ships” which would come to subdue Asshur and Eber. The question is whether Asshur is the Assyrians or the local Asshur (Gn 25:18, 2 Sa 2:9 and probably Ps 83:8). Some have suggested the ancient Greeks and Romans as the ones coming in ships to the Middle East. The original Kittim were probably the Philistines or groups associated with them. The term Kittim was later applied to the Romans. It is likely that the prophecy applies first to the local early peoples and by extension to the later peoples.

Note: Although we are told at the end of Numbers 24 that Balaam “got up and returned home” (v. 25), we learn that he went to the Midianites and persuaded them to seduce the Israelites to worship Peor (ch. 31:16) and that he was killed by the Israelites (ch. 31:8; Jos 13:22).

NUMBERS 25

v. 1-3 While encamped at Shittim, the Israelites committed sexual sin with the daughters of Moab, indulging in the licentious worship of Baal-Peor. We are told later that it was Balaam who gave this advice to the Moabites and the Midianites (ch. 31:16).

v. 7 Phinehas, son of Eleazar the high priest, puts an end to the shameless act of an Israelite and a Midianite woman, driving a spear through them as they fornicate before the eyes of Moses. This also stops a plague in which 24,000 men were killed (v. 9). For this act Phinehas is promised the priesthood.

In 1 Corinthians 10:8 Paul gives the number killed as 23,000. It is possible that this is the number killed directly by the plague, while a thousand died by other means, “hanged by the judges” as tradition explains it, or both may simply be round numbers.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Nu 22-25)

1. Which two kings had Israel defeated prior to encamping on the Plains of Moab? Why had the Moabites been spared? Who was their king?
2. Locate on a map Israel’s approximate place of encampment before its entry into Canaan.
3. By what means did the king of Moab try to halt the advance of God’s army?
4. From which area did Balaam come? What made him such a deceptive enemy? What did the LORD use to rebuke him? (Tell the story.)
5. With which expression does Peter pinpoint Balaam’s weakness? What application does he make for us (2 Pe 2:10-16)?
6. Trace the progression of Balaam’s prophecies:
 - a. How does Balaam extol Israel in Oracle I?
 - b. With which words does Balaam point to Israel’s greatness in Oracle II?
 - c. How does Oracle III point to Israel’s previous blessings?

- d. From Oracle IV give the climax of Balaam's prophecies and their fulfillment.
 - e. With what kind of pronouncements do Balaam's prophecies close?
7. By what strategy did Balaam succeed in bringing evil upon Israel? How did Phinehas distinguish himself on this occasion? What warning lies in this incident for us today?

CHAPTER NINETEEN FINAL PREPARATIONS (Nu 26-36)

NUMBERS 26

After the plague another census is taken. This one is according to “families” in reference to the future division of the land (v. 53). The total number of the “new generation” is about two thousand less than the census taken 38 years previously (Numbers 1). While Manasseh gained the most, the biggest loss occurs in the case of Simeon’s tribe, which may be due to the recent plague. (The Israelite who committed the flagrant act of fornication with the Midianite woman was a Simeonite – ch. 25:14).

COMPARISON OF THE FIRST AND SECOND CENSUSES

TRIBE	FIRST CENSUS	SECOND CENSUS	
Reuben	46,500	43,730	7 > 9
Simeon	59,300	22,200	3 > 12
Gad	45,650	40,500	8 > 10
Judah	74,600	76,500	1 > 1
Issachar	54,400	64,300	5 > 3
Zebulun	57,400	60,500	4 > 4
Ephraim	40,500	32,500	10 > 11
Manasseh	32,200	52,700	12 > 6
Benjamin	35,400	45,600	11 > 7
Dan	62,700	64,400	2 > 2
Asher	41,500	53,400	9 > 5
Naphtali	53,400	45,400	6 > 8
TOTAL	603,550	601,730	

According to the second census the east side tribes in the camp gained 14,900 in population. The south side lost 45,020. The west side gained 22,700. And the north side gained 5,600.

NUMBERS 27

Concerning the prospective inheritance of Canaan a problem arises. The Manassite Zelophehad has five daughters, but no sons. By the LORD’s direction Moses rules that daughters (or the nearest kinsman) should receive the inheritance, safeguarding the right of family name and possession. The importance of preserving such rights is connected with the promise of the land. (Further references to this matter of Zelophehad’s daughters also occur later in Numbers 36:1-11 and Jos 17:3-4).

The last half of this chapter relates the LORD’s directive concerning how Moses is to die (v. 12-14), Moses’ request for the appointment of another leader (v. 15-17), and the commissioning of Joshua before Eleazar (v. 18-23). Joshua was not to have Moses’ preeminence and authority in that he was placed under “the Urim before the LORD” (v. 21). Although at various times the LORD did communicate with Joshua directly (Jos 1:1; 3:15; 6:2; 8:1 etc.), there were times when other methods were needed to receive the LORD’s directive (Jos 7:14-18; 9:14).

NUMBERS 28, 29

These chapters outline the sacrifices for the ritual year with its festivals – similar to Leviticus 23. Here, however, the quantities of sacrifices for each occasion (Daily, Sabbath, Monthly, Passover, Feast of

Weeks, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles) are given, looking forward to Israel's settlement in the land.

Note the repetition of "seven": months, days, lambs, etc. The total was 1,273 sacrifices: 1093 sheep, 113 bulls, 37 rams, and 30 goats. See the powerpoint on sacrifices.

NUMBERS 30

The legal regulations pertaining to vows have already been referred to in Leviticus 27. Here special emphasis is laid upon the validation of a woman's vow, which according to Israel's economy depended much upon the authority of husband or father rather than upon the woman herself.

NUMBERS 31

The LORD commands the destruction of the Midianites because of their involvement in the Baal-Peor orgy (ch. 25).

The LORD's concern to root out the corrupting influence of heathen rites is here again demonstrated. Very little is said about the actual fighting itself, except that the Israelites were victorious and that the leaders in Midian – including Balaam (v. 8) – were killed.

Of added interest in this chapter is the instruction concerning plunder – how it was to be divided, purified, etc. The quantity of plunder given in this chapter (v. 32-47) is so great that it is questioned by some critics. Conservative students argue, however, that a thorough understanding of the real situation in the basis of historical evidence shows the report as not being incredible at all (KD, *Commentary*, p. 229-230).

The plunder was to be divided equally between soldiers and people. Of the soldier's half 1/500th was to go to the LORD's temple service of the priests. Of the people's half 1/50th was to go to the Levites.

NUMBERS 32

The Reubenites and Gadites, tribes with much cattle, noting that the lands east of Jordan are good for grazing, ask to receive their inheritance there (v. 1-5).

Moses, sensing certain dangers in this request, exacts from these tribes the promise to cooperate in taking the entire land, also west of Jordan, before settling on this side (v. 6-32).

Half the tribe of Manasseh is included in this apportionment (v. 33), because the descendants of Makir, son of Manasseh, went to Gilead, captured it and drove out the Amorites who were there (v. 39). "Gilead" here refers to the central portion of land east of Jordan (Numbers 26:29 – "Makir was the father of Gilead"). This area of land stretched out to the north and south of the Jabbok River.

NUMBERS 33

At the LORD's command (v. 2) Moses records Israel's places of encampment from Egypt to the plains of Moab. Verses 1-15 take us to Sinai; verses 16-18 to Rithmah (possibly near Kadesh, where the incident of the spies took place); verses 19-36 cover the 38 years of wandering; verses 37-49 the journey around Edom to the Plains of Moab. In the concluding verses (50-56) Moses is instructed to exterminate the Canaanites and apportion their land by lot.

The list seems to be a stylized list selecting 40 camps (not counting the beginning and end point) to

represent the 40 years. There are additions and omissions from partial lists elsewhere in Numbers and Deuteronomy. Most of the places cannot be identified. See the powerpoint on the conclusion of Numbers

NUMBERS 34

The borders of Israel's future homeland are described, borders which Israel did not actually attain until the time of David and Solomon:

- | | | |
|-------|---|--|
| South | – | Desert of Zin along the border of Edom (roughly from the south point of the Salt Sea in a line from east to west) (v. 3-5). |
| West | – | The Great Sea (v. 6). |
| North | – | The places given here “cannot be determined with certainty,” as most commentators state. The book of Joshua gives more identifiable boundaries to the north (Jos 11:17) (v. 7-9). |
| East | – | The Sea of Kinnereth (Galilee) and Jordan River (v. 10-12). Lands east of the Jordan assigned to Reuben, Gad, and one-half of Manasseh are not included here, having been previously assigned. |

See the map at the end of the chapter.

The chapter concludes with a list of tribal heads appointed to lead in the division and distribution of land (v. 16-29). The only familiar names are those of Eleazar, Joshua, and Caleb.

NUMBERS 35

Forty-eight cities are designated for the Levites, places for their dwelling with pasture lands around them. According to Jacob's words in Genesis 49 the Levites, together with the descendants of Simeon, were to be scattered and dispersed in Israel. This curse became for the Levites a blessing in that they, as the LORD's special property, would dwell among all the tribes as a reminder of the spiritual significance of all Israel as a nation of the LORD's priests. They were to teach the people Yahweh's rights and law (Lv 10:11).

Six of these Levitical cities were to be cities of refuge. Those guilty of manslaughter (not murder) could thus be protected from the blood avenger of the slain person by seeking refuge in one of these cities. Upon arriving at the gates of the city, the fugitive would plead his cause before the elders. If approved, he would be granted protection until the time of the death of the high priest, when he would be set free.

The right of blood revenge (*jus talionis*) in the case of murder was a principle established by God in Genesis 9:5-6. Here we see, however, that this right is restricted to cases of premeditated slaying, where the principle of the “redeemer-kinsman” (לֹאֵלֶיךָ), frequently mentioned in Scripture, prevailed.

The principle of more than one witness in capital cases is also emphasized (v. 30).

As the death of the high priest served to free the manslayer, so the death of our Great High Priest has wrought eternal redemption for mankind (He 9:14-15).

NUMBERS 36

Elders from the tribe of Manasseh complain that the legislation given in the case of Zelophehad's daughters (ch. 27) could result in the loss of this portion of their inheritance if these daughters would marry outside the tribe.

The LORD rules that they must marry within the tribe or forfeit their inheritance, "so that every Israelite will possess the inheritance of his fathers" (v. 8).

+ + + + + + +

While the book of Numbers seems to close on matters of lesser importance – laws relating to inheritance – this was not unimportant in the light of God's covenant promises to his people. The concern for an inheritance still to be realized contained a hope as yet unfulfilled, but one related to God's promise for Israel's entire future, and one to which the Messianic hope was also connected. God promised a land. That land was for his chosen people. Through them all the nations of the world would be blessed. Nothing which had to do with this promised inheritance could be regarded as insignificant.

+ + + + + + +

One would not like to close the Book of Numbers without mentioning something about the symbolic significance of Israel's journey to the Promised Land. It marked the most important historical event in the history of God's Old Testament people. It was the fulfillment of the promise given to the patriarchs. It meant freedom, rest, a place called "homeland" after hundreds of years of bondage in a strange land. Above all there was attached to this Land of Promise the hope of the Messiah, the great Deliverer from all evils of body and soul.

Yet it took many years and many trials for this journey to the Promised Land to be accomplished. This is the story of Numbers. What should ordinarily have been accomplished in a matter of days (Dt 1:2) took years, years which at times must have seemed to Israel as one long frustrating experience.

How revealing these years! What do they tell us? On the one hand we see on Israel's side endless bickering, complaints, even rebellion and apostasy. On God's side, on the other hand, we see guidance, providential care, and continued mercy in spite of Israel's unfaithfulness.

And so Numbers is not just a catalog of incidents during Israel's stay in the wilderness. It demonstrates God's covenant-love for his people in every emergency. It also demonstrates God's stern but just and necessary judgments over against his people's repeated faithfulness and rebellion. And through it all God was faithful to his promise. In judgment and in mercy he led his chosen people to the Promised Land.

God's people today are on a journey to a Promised Land. It is a land which offers perfect rest, freedom from all earthly suffering, perfect fellowship with a loving heavenly Father. The way to that land is open. God's promise is sure. He gave his only Son to remove all barriers lying in the way. There are dangers on the way. In countless ways Satan, the sinful world, and our own rebellious nature try to lead us astray. And sometimes the way seems too long and the frustrations and disappointments unbearable.

A faithful pastor, however, will constantly be reminding his people of the heavenly Land of Promise which lies ahead. He will warn them with all sternness of the dangers, yet above all constantly encouraging them to look to the Savior as the only Way, the Truth and the Life.

THERE IS NO MORE IMPORTANT CALLING IN ALL THE WORLD THAN THIS!

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Nu 26-36)

1. For what purpose was the second census taken (ch. 26)? Were there any significant differences in the results?
2. What was the complaint of Zelophehad's daughters? What decision was declared concerning it?
3. Who was to serve as Moses' successor? Was there to be any difference relating to his service?
4. Why were such stern reprisals taken against the Midianites (ch. 31)? Why do we not regard this annihilation as a "primitive concept of God"? Who was chosen to direct this campaign?
5. How were those who had engaged in battle to be "cleansed"? Where have we heard of a previous reference to this?
6. How was the booty of a victorious army to be apportioned?
7. Which tribes were to receive their inheritance east of Jordan? Under what conditions? (Refer to a map to see the approximate area assigned to each.)
8. What directive did the LORD impress upon Israel concerning the disposition of the conquered Canaanites (ch. 33)?
9. Define the general boundaries of Canaan to be apportioned to the 9½ remaining allotments. What added directives were given concerning this apportionment (ch. 34)?
10. What provision was made for the Levites? How many "cities of refuge"? What regulations applied to these (ch. 35)?
11. Which case arises again in the final chapter (ch. 36) and what disposition was made concerning it? Why were matters pertaining to inheritance and land-ownership of such great concern to the faithful in Israel?
12. How can we compare Israel's journey to Canaan with our life-journey as Christians?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

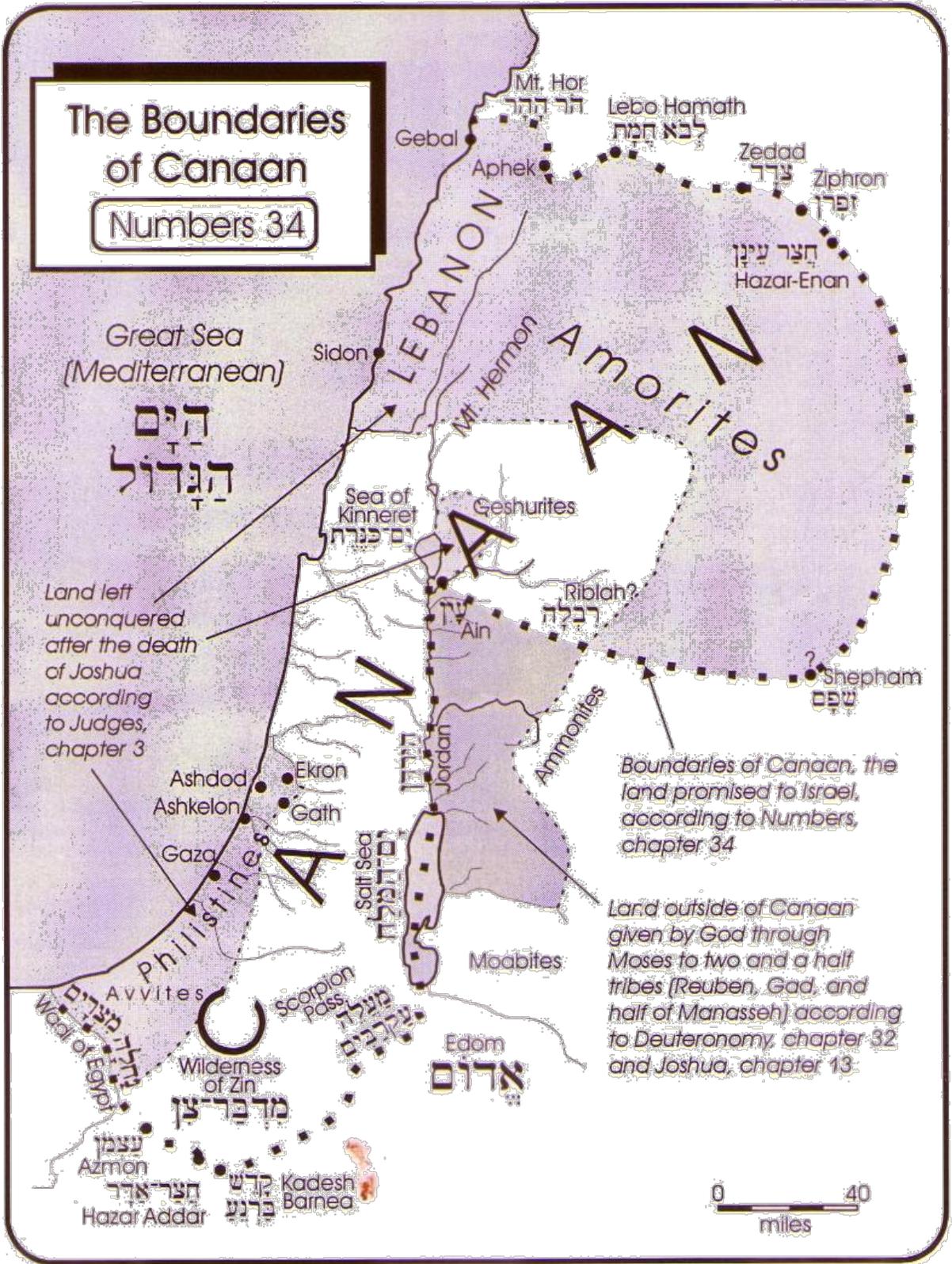
See the powerpoint on the Transjordan lands.

See the powerpoints for the end of Numbers and for Joshua for maps of the tribal territories, the levitical cities, and the borders of the land.

FOR ADDED CONSIDERATION

Suggest a theme and possible occasion for the following texts occurring in Numbers:

TEXT	STORY
6:22-27	Aaronic Blessing
9:15-23	Guidance by a Cloud
10:35-36	Moses' Call to March
11:10-17	70 Elders to Help
11:23	"Is the Lord's Arm Too Short?"
12:8	God Attests Moses' Leadership
13:30/14:6-9	Caleb's Witness/Joshua's Witness
14:17-19	Moses' Mediation
15:37-40	Tassels on Garments
16:45-48	Aaron's Mediation
20:1-13	The Waters of Meribah
20:27-29	Aaron's Death
21:4-9	The Bronze Snake
22:21-31	Balaam's Donkey
23:10b	"Let Me Die ..."
24:10-17	A Star Out of Jacob
27:12-23	Moses' Successor
32:23	Transjordan Tribes



CHAPTER TWENTY INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY; FIRST ORATION (Dt 1:1-4:43)

The fifth book of Moses is headed אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים, “These are the words,” from which it receives its Hebrew name “*Debharim*.”

The Septuagint calls the book Δευτερονόμιον (Vulgate: *Deuteronomium*), from which our English title is taken. The word, which may be translated “the second giving of the law,” describes the books as a restatement of the commandments and statutes previously given. This designation is partially correct, since Deuteronomy does to a great extent contain a restatement of the previous legislation given on Sinai. Incidentally, the Septuagint designation arose from an incorrect rendering of words found in Deuteronomy 17:18 (מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת), words which refer to making a copy of the law for the king.

Deuteronomy, however, contains more than a simple repetition of laws. The book has a style and character all its own. It is more sermon than law code. It is rhetorical and hortatory, both in its historical as well as in its legislative portions. It reflects the situation in which it is found: the last words of a tried and faithful leader who is taking solemn leave of his people. Restatements of the law are therefore presented in such a way as to impress them deeply upon the hearts of his hearers. Promises are bountiful and attractive. Threats are forbidding and severe. The covenant is emphatically confirmed (ch. 26:16-19). The entire tone is sermonic. Repeatedly Moses reminds Israel of God’s gracious, redeeming acts in spite of their unfaithfulness. He encourages and exhorts God’s people to be faithful to the covenant.

Another difference can be seen in the fact that the book of Deuteronomy presents a development of the law in view of Israel’s future as a people living a settled life in the land of Canaan. There is no intention to give a new or second law. Israel has reached the plains of Moab. It is on the threshold of the Promised Land. Explanations and illustrations are now furnished on how to apply the law to the forms of religious, social, and political life of the nation in this new land.

The emphasis is different than in Exodus and Leviticus. Luther adds this thought: “Deuteronomy is a compendium and summary of the whole law and wisdom of the people of Israel, wherein those things which related to the priests and Levites are omitted, and only such things are included as the people generally were required to know.” It should also be borne in mind that Moses is addressing a new generation.

In keeping with its nature as a sermon Deuteronomy emphasizes rewards and penalties in connection with the presentation of the law (compare Lv 26). This does not mean it is setting up a doctrine of merit beside that of grace. The rewards are still rewards of grace, and the threats are encouragements to fight the Old Adam. Israel, we need to remember, was not all spiritual. Restraints for the sinful nature were certainly needed. A method of training was called for to cope with the immature status of a people still under the tutorship of the law (Ga 3:24; 4:2).

We summarize the general content of Deuteronomy, in these words:

Deuteronomy is mainly a repetition, explanation, and expansion of the previous legislation in the form of three addresses delivered by Moses to the assembly of the people in the Plains of Moab, in the 40th year of Israel’s journey, after the conquest of the Trans-Jordan country, and shortly before

his death.

The closing chapters (31-34) present the last acts and death of Moses.

Outline

Theme: THE REPETITION AND COMPLETION OF THE THEOCRATIC
LAW- CODE FOR A PEOPLE WHO ARE TO TAKE POSSESSION
OF THE PROMISED LAND

Or: MOSES' REAPPLICATION OF THE SINAITIC COVENANT TO
THE NEW GENERATION

- I. The legislative addresses of Moses, ch. 1-30
 - A. The First Oration: Historical and admonitory (1:1-4:43)
 - B. The Second Oration: Repetition and completion of the law (4:44-26:19)
 - C. The Third Oration: Admonition to keep the law faithfully (27-30)

- II. The last acts and death of Moses, ch. 31-34
 - A. Joshua's appointment (31)
 - B. The Song of Moses (32)
 - C. Moses' blessing (33)
 - D. Moses' death (34)

AUTHORSHIP

Reference has already been made to the content of the book itself, which is Moses' final admonition and encouragement to Israel prior to his death. With the exception of the final chapters the book contains nothing but words addressed by Moses to the people. The historical and geographical references in the text agree with the situation of a people who had just completed a long and arduous journey and now anticipate the conquest of the promised land. The memory of the Egyptian bondage is still vivid. The land of Canaan to the west of the Jordan is viewed from the outside. The explanation of law codes fits the context described.

Deuteronomy forms the foundation of later books of the Old Testament, in particular the warnings of such prophets as Isaiah and Jeremiah. Jesus makes a similar use of Deuteronomy in his preaching to Israel. He quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 in establishing "the first and greatest commandment" (Mt 22:37). He uses the book three times against Satan in his temptation (Dt 8:3; 6:16 and 13; Mt 4). Other references are frequent: Mt 22:24 coll. Dt 25:5ff; Mt 19:8 and 5:31 coll. Dt 24:1; Mt 26:11 coll. Dt 15:11; Jn 8:17 and Mt 18:16 coll. Dt 19:15; Mt 10:37 coll. Dt 33:9. This constitutes a powerful endorsement of the book's authenticity and Mosaic authorship. (See also Ac 3:22 coll. Dt 18:15; Ro 10:5-8 coll. Dt 30:12-13; 30:14; 1 Cor 9:8-9 coll. Dt 25:4).

In spite of all this – as is to be expected – the Wellhausen-type critics point to "discrepancies," "geographical inaccuracies," "historical inconsistencies" and the like in order to prove their own theories of various sources and also a 7th Century BC or a post-exilic authorship. Critics frequently connect the origins of Deuteronomy with Josiah's reform. Some of these criticisms will be considered in connection with the material itself; others as we consider the historical-critical method. Most of the so-called "strictures" of Mosaic authorship are based upon misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the text itself, the critics preferring to supplant its obviously intended meaning with their own pet presuppositions.

Critics point, for example, to the “two versions of the Decalogue” (Ex 20 and Dt 5), ascribing each to a separate author. Actually the “two versions” prove the very opposite. A “later author” would surely have used greater care in any attempt to make changes. Moses, however, could venture such a free rendering of the original, supplying such changes as would be in keeping with the second occasion.

The other “discrepancies” between Deuteronomy and the earlier books of the Pentateuch are the same sorts of variations that occur in the Synoptic Gospels. Different accounts select different points to report because of different emphases. Also the order in Deuteronomy is often topical rather than chronological (even in Exodus and Numbers the order is not strictly chronological).

The reference to “beyond the Jordan” (בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן) in the first five verses of the book is taken as proof by negative critics that the author must have lived within Canaan proper. Gleason Archer, however, cites numerous references to show that this term “had become a standard designation for the territory to the east of Jericho regardless of where the speaker happened to be” (*Survey*, p. 256). Archer adds: “So far as this writer is aware, there are no expressions in the text of Deuteronomy which are not perfectly reconcilable with Mosaic authorship. Only chapter 34 is demonstrably post-Mosaic, since it contains a short account of Moses’ decease.” The NIV simply translates the disputed phrase “east of Jordan” and the KJV “on this side of Jordan.” Similar expressions are the later name of Syria-Palestine as Trans-Euphrates during the Persian period or the use of the name Transjordan in the 20th century

Negative critics of the Wellhausen period insisted that the legislation found in Deuteronomy must have been “post-exilic,” giving all sorts of reasons for this claim. Studies, however, have compared the structure of Deuteronomy with the suzerain treaties (treaties between an overlord and his vassals) of the Hittite period (ca. 1450 B.C.) (Meredith Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*). Its preamble, historical prologue, main provisions, curses and blessings, and arrangements for succession compare better with 2nd millennium BC rather than 1st millennium BC treaty structures.

The Six Elements of a Hittite Suzerainty Treaty

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Preamble | The suzerain identifies himself (Parallel to Dt 1:1-5). |
| 2. Historical Prolog | A recital of the suzerain’s kindness vs. the vassal’s acts of rebellion (Parallel to the First Oration, 1:6-4:43). |
| 3. Covenant Stipulations | Duties of the vassal explicitly stated (Parallel to the Second Oration, 4:44-26:9). |
| 4. Blessings and Curses | Encouragements and threats (Parallel to the Third Oration, 27-30). |
| 5. Statement providing for the deposit of the agreement in a safe place and for public reading (Parallel to Dt 31:9ff, 19, 24-29). | |
| 6. List of Witnesses | Names of gods (The Song of Moses and heaven and earth substitute for the many gods of a pagan treaty, 32:1-4; 33:1-5). |

Critics, of course dispute this claim and see similarities to 1st century treaties, especially in the emphasis on blessings and curses. While these arguments are interesting enough, a study of the content of the book itself provides the most convincing testimony to its Mosaic authorship, given under divine inspiration.

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DEUTERONOMY 1

v. 1-5 The introduction to the First Oration.

v. 5 “Moses began to expound this law.” There is but one law. The book of Deuteronomy was not intended to furnish a new law. It was to explain clearly the law already in existence, as this passage clearly states.

v. 6 Beginning of the First Oration. Moses begins with a retrospective glance at the events of the 40 years from Sinai to Moab.

v. 7 This verse refers to the various regions of Palestine, designations which are mentioned frequently in the Old Testament and are important for an understanding of the country’s geographical divisions:

- a. “In the Arabah” (בְּעֶרְבָה) – the great depression, including the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea, and the rift south to the Gulf of Elat.
- b. “In the mountains” (בְּהָרָה) – the mountains of central Palestine (Judah and Ephraim).
- c. “In the western foothills” (בְּשַׁפְּלָה) – the piedmont region lying between the mountains and the coastal plain.
- d. “In the Negev” (בְּנֶגֶב) – the southland, a semi-arid region.
- e. “Along the seacoast” (בְּחוֹף הַיָּם) – the narrow strip along the coast of the Great Sea, the Mediterranean.

v. 46 “Many days ...” In fact, 38 years!

Moses in this chapter simply recounts the events leading up to this day and the many years spent in the wilderness. (The “many days” is carried over into the next chapter.) In contrast to the covenant faithfulness of the LORD (v. 6-18), Moses sets the infidelity and disobedience of Israel (v. 19-40). The fact that the LORD was renewing his covenant against a background of repeated disobedience on the part of the people magnifies his grace and goodness.

A parallel is drawn here with suzerain treaties between lord and vassal from that era. They were introduced by the identification of the lord (as in v. 1-5), and the historical justification for the lord’s continued reign (as in v. 6-40).

DEUTERONOMY 2

This chapter continues the historical prologue, tracing Israel’s continued wanderings, their sparing of Edom and Moab by God’s direction, and then after the 38 years (v. 14) and the growing up of a new generation, the defeat of Sihon, the Amorite king of Heshbon.

Parenthetically (v. 10-12 and 20-25), this history shows how the LORD had driven out giants, Emmites and

Rephaites, in behalf of the descendants of Esau and Lot. The assurance that Israel could therefore surely rely on his ability to fulfill his promises to them is the obvious purpose of these digressions.

Negative critics, of course, point to these parenthetical sections as proof of various source documents.

DEUTERONOMY 3

This chapter concludes the review of history: the conquest of Og of Bashan; the division of land east of the Jordan to Reuben, Gad, and part of Manasseh; Moses' prayer to enter the land and the LORD's refusal; Joshua's commissioning.

Note how the historical prolog emphasizes the LORD's goodness vs. Israel's unfaithfulness.

DEUTERONOMY 4:1-43

The historical prologue closes with exhortations:

v. 1-14 This will show you wisdom: You saw what the LORD did at Baal Peor ... You stood at the foot of the mountain ... You heard!

v. 2 Note the prohibition of adding to or subtracting from Scripture which is echoed in Revelation 22.

v. 9-10 These verses can serve as an excellent text for a sermon on Christian Education!

v. 13 Note the term "the Ten Words" in.

v. 15-31 Idolatry is folly!

Verse 19 does not condone idolatry but refers to a time of God's withholding the final judgment and waiting as in Acts 14:16, Acts 17:30 and Romans 1.

v. 26 Heaven and earth as witnesses — see Isaiah 1.

v. 32-40 The LORD is God! He is incomparable. See Isaiah 40.

Attached to this section is an insertion: the announcement of the appointment of three cities of refuge east of Jordan: Bezer for Reuben, Ramoth for Gad, Golan for Manasseh (v. 41-43). Why this insertion here? It was the most recent event in God's gracious government of his people Israel. It also gave God's approval to Israel's occupation of the land east of the Jordan.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Dt 1:1-4:43)

1. Why is the name "Deuteronomy" for the fifth book of Moses somewhat misleading?
2. Why is the Hebrew (Masoretic) title appropriate (Dt 1:1a)?
3. How do both situation and content of Deuteronomy show that it is more than a mere repetition of the law?
4. Show how the content of Deuteronomy bears out Paul's description of the OT covenant as a *παιδαγωγός* (ch. 4:25ff and ch. 28).

5. Give Deuteronomy's basic outline.
6. Relate Deuteronomy's contents to the structure of a Hittite suzerainty treaty.
7. What does this structure-relationship do to the Wellhausen theory? Explain.
8. How does the context of Deuteronomy support Mosaic authorship?
9. Show how the New Testament supports the same:
 - a. by showing how Jesus made use of Deuteronomy;
 - b. by showing other New Testament passages quoted from Deuteronomy.
10. What chief purpose does the preamble serve (ch. 1:1-5)?
11. Explain Moses' parenthetical statement in 1:2: it takes 11 days to go from Horeb to Kadesh.
12. What time period is covered by Moses' words: "And so you stayed in Kadesh many days" (1:46, 2:14)?
13. Why was Israel told to spare the Moabites and Ammonites?
14. Discuss the significance of the parenthetical statements in Chapter 2 (2:10-12; 2:20-23) about Emites and Rephaites.
15. Which two kingdoms did the Israelites conquer in order to control the area east of Jordan? Name the kings and the peoples involved.
16. What two general truths does Moses emphasize throughout his historical prolog (ch. 1:6-3:29).
17. How does Moses bring the first section to a close? Give examples.
18. What insertion is made between the first two orations of Moses? Explain the insertion at this point in Deuteronomy (4:41-43).

FOR ADDED CONSIDERATION

In introducing the first oration Moses gives a description of the geography of Palestine – the area the LORD swore he would give to the patriarchs and their descendants (ch. 1:6-8). We will make a more detailed study of the geography in connection with the distribution of the land in Joshua.

Learn the Hebrew as well as the English designations of the five areas mentioned. Locate these on a map of Israel.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE SECOND ORATION

PART I – FEAR AND LOVE GOD! (Dt 5-11)

DEUTERONOMY 4:44-49

In these verses Moses introduces the Second Oration, which consists of a repetition and elaboration of the law. The scene is precisely set, near Beth Peor, below the slopes of Pisgah. The prologue now is finished. Moses' farewell is about to come to the heart of the matter!

The first section of Moses' Second Oration, in which he reviews and reapplies the theocratic law-code for the new generation, concentrates on the moral law of God.

DEUTERONOMY 5

The Ten Commandments are repeated. Variations are few.

v. 12 Note "observe" (שמור) instead of "remember" (זכור) the Sabbath day.

v. 15 In the Third Commandment, the book of Exodus stresses the creation-principle (six days labor-seventh day rest) as the original model for the Sabbath rest (Ex. 20:11) ... Deuteronomy stresses the redemption-principle (rescue from slavery in Egypt) as the model for the Sabbath rest (Dt 5:15). The New Testament emphasis, associating the Sabbath with the eternal rest won by Christ's resurrection triumph, follows more the stress of Deuteronomy. See also Hebrews 4.

v. 16 The Fourth Commandment in Deuteronomy adds the promise: "That it may go well ..." This is in keeping with Moses' hortatory tone in Deuteronomy.

v. 21 The order of the Tenth and Ninth Commandments is reversed.

In this oral presentation of the Decalogue Moses at times deviated from the words engraved in stone. He of all people could exercise this privilege. A copyist would have hesitated to do so. This variation is comparable to the variation of the Lord's Prayer in the gospels.

v. 22-23 Following the repetition of the Decalogue, Moses emphasizes its uniqueness as having been "proclaimed in a loud voice" and written by the LORD himself "on two stone tablets." The LORD's "glory and majesty," his "voice from the fire" is emphasized so that Israel should "be careful to do" what the LORD has commanded.

All this is intended by Moses to move Israel to fear the LORD and his judgments. Note the direction toward the FEAR of the LORD, that awesome respect which would cause the people's hearts to turn to him.

DEUTERONOMY 6

v. 2 "So that you ... may fear the LORD your God." Here what has been expressed in the closing verses of the previous chapter in various ways is stated with the use of the word "fear" (ירא). The word is used frequently in the Old Testament in the sense of "stand in awe," "reverence," particularly in the sense of a

godly fear inspired by the majesty of a holy and righteous God.

v. 4 The *Shema*, Israel's Creed: "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one." There is none other! (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד: 6:4)

v. 5 "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."

The fear of God is modified and sanctified by the motive of love (אָהַב).

Hence Luther's use of "fear and love" as motives for obedience in his explanation of the Decalogue! Jesus therefore on the basis of this passage calls the command to love God with all the heart "the first and great commandment." He places the commandment in Leviticus 19:18 ("Love your neighbor as yourself") on a par with this and observes that "all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments" (Mt 22:37-40; Mk 12:29-31; Lk 10:27). This is our basis for referring to two tables of the law.

v. 6-9 These verses are often appropriately used as a text for Christian education. The context offers a basis for proper motivation of a thorough teaching-learning process of God's Word. (The literal practice of wearing phylacteries on one's person and affixing mezuzahs on one's doorpost came in vogue among Jews. Remember the tassels of Numbers 15 which served a similar purpose.)

v. 20-25 When later generations ask: "What is the meaning, etc.," tell them of the great redemptive acts of the LORD! Again the undeserved love of a Covenant God is stressed as the motivating force for the keeping of the law!

DEUTERONOMY 7

The preceding chapter emphasizes the "Oneness" of the only true God and contains stern warnings against idolatry. This chapter warns with equal emphasis against any kind of toleration of the Canaanites and their idolatry.

In the case of the seven nations inhabiting Canaan "stronger" than Israel (v. 2) – they were to be destroyed totally. There was to be no mercy, no treaty in dealing with them, no intermarriage. Especially their idols (Asherah poles) were to be destroyed. The "יְהוָה principle" i.e. "devoted to the LORD" in the sense of destroying them totally, is indicated here.

Why was Israel given the land? It was not due to moral superiority. "It was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers" (v. 8). By grace alone!

The observance of the LORD's commands would bring great blessings, also earthly blessings and sure victory over all enemies. Failure to do so would bring severe punishment (v. 9-26). At the same time the LORD forewarns that victory would not come all at once, but "little by little," so that the wild animals could not take over (v. 22).

Some may wonder why the LORD insists upon unconditional destruction when dealing with the Canaanites. A knowledge of the Canaanite deities sheds light on this. The one mentioned here specifically is Asherah. Asherah was the wife of El in Ugaritic mythology, one of a pantheon of gods utterly depraved, whose worship entailed the most demoralizing practices of the time, such as sacred prostitution and child sacrifice. Because of the depraved sensual character of Canaanite religion, it was dangerously

contaminating. Because of its syncretistic nature it was a constant threat. It was, as Unger states, “a question of destroying or being destroyed, of keeping separated or of being contaminated and consumed” (p. 176). This information about Canaanite religion is based largely on studies of Ugaritic epic literature. We will undertake a fuller study of this topic in connection with Joshua.

The seven nations: we know relatively little about what distinguishes these nations. Did they speak different languages? Did they look different? Did they dress different?

The Hittites (Hatti - הַחִתִּי) are not necessarily related to the later Indo-European Hittites of Anatolia. The Amarna letters do, however, contain Indo-European names.

The Girgashites: virtually nothing is known of what distinguished them from the others. They seem to have lived near the Sea of Galilee.

Amorites (Amurru) were “Westerners” to the Akkadians and “Northerners” to Israel. When distinguished from Canaanites they were residents of the hills and Transjordan.

“Canaanites” is used as an umbrella term, but sometimes refers especially to inhabitants of the coast and valleys.

Perizzites were mainly in the hill country. “Villagers” has been suggested as an interpretation of the name.

Hivites were located in the Lebanon region. Some have associated them with Hurrians. Others think they were nomads.

Jebusites inhabited Jerusalem. Their king in the Amarna letters has a non-Semitic name.

The number seven may be a representative sample of the diverse inhabitants of the land.

DEUTERONOMY 8

The chapter contains a warning against self-sufficiency, reminding Israel of God’s miraculous preservation in the wilderness. “Man does not live on bread alone . . .” (v. 3; Mt 4:4). The element of TRUST is added to FEAR and LOVE. Note again Luther’s explanation to the Ten Commandments! Luther breathed Scripture.

The warning is added that in days of blessing Israel should not say: “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth in me” (v. 17).

An excellent reminder to America. Good material for texts at the occasion of Thanksgiving!

DEUTERONOMY 9

“Not because of your righteousness” will God permit you to inherit Canaan, but because of his promise to your fathers (v. 5). “Remember this, O Israel,” is the burden of this admonitory chapter (v. 7). Yes, remember especially the incident of the Golden Calf!

Other rebellious acts of this “stiff-necked people” are referred to (v. 22). Moses emphasizes that he could base his intercessions only upon God’s promises to the patriarchs.

Lack of “civic righteousness” in violation of the natural knowledge of the law does bring judgment on nations (v 4). What concern we must have for our own country and its growing lack of righteousness.

DEUTERONOMY 10

v. 1-11 Moses is not concerned here with a chronological order of events, but with the substance of an admonition, which was to remember the grace of God reassured to Israel in the restoration of the tables of stone and in the renewal of the covenant relationship.

v. 12-16 “What does the LORD your God ask of you?” Fear, love, service, obedience. “Circumcise your hearts.” Mere outward observance isn’t enough!

v. 19 Love to the underprivileged would be a proof of this heart-circumcision (1 Jn 3:10 and 17), a fruit of faith in a God who has done wonders.

v. 22 The fulfillment of the promise to the patriarchs!

Note: How could the Pharisees of Christ’s day, in the light of such clear expressions of truth, get all twisted up in a religion of work-righteousness?
How can Roman Catholicism, in the light of clear biblical teaching of both Old and New Testaments, rest on a foundation of righteousness based on human achievements?
Simply because man’s natural heart prefers deeds to creeds, self-glory to a renunciation of self, the wisdom of men to the “foolishness of preaching.”

DEUTERONOMY 11

Love the LORD and keep his commandments! This chapter concludes the series of hortatory admonitions pertaining to the moral law.

Note the beautiful description of the land (v. 8-14). The phrase “west of the road” in v. 30 is obscure.

“I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse.” Significantly this sub-section closes with a reference to something which is to take place after Israel under Joshua has conquered a portion of Canaan and renews the covenant in the promised land itself at Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. This is fulfilled according to Joshua 8:30-35. More detailed directions for these blessings and curses are found in Deuteronomy 27 and 28.

The next chapter proceeds to admonitions pertaining to the Levitical or ceremonial law.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Dt 5-11)

1. What comprises the general contents of Moses’ Second Oration (Dt 5-26)?
2. Why have the first chapters of this oration (5-11) been called “the heart of the book”?
3. Point out the differences in the wording of the Decalogue as presented in Dt 5 from Ex 20 with reference to:
 - a. The Third Commandment;
 - b. The Fourth Commandment;
 - c. The Ninth and Tenth Commandments.

4. How does Moses remind Israel of the different way in which the LORD presented the Decalogue as compared with the rest of the theocratic law code?
5. What did Moses emphasize as the primary forces of motivation for keeping the Law? Who made use of these thoughts in explaining the moral law of God?
6. What use did Jesus make of Deuteronomy 6?
7. What action was Israel to take against the nations inhabiting Canaan? Why did the LORD prescribe such drastic measures?
8. What use did Jesus make of Deuteronomy 8?
9. What outstanding example of Israel's faithlessness does Moses use to preach against idolatry? Yet how did God assure Israel that he had restored them to their place as his covenant people?
10. Where in Canaan were the people to renew their covenant pledge? In what unusual manner was this to take place?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Find an appropriate text in this first part of Moses' Second Oration (ch. 5-11) for:
 - a. A sermon on Christian education
 - b. A Thanksgiving sermon.

Supply a basic outline for one of the above texts.

2. Find several outstanding quotations in this same section to counter the idea that the Pentateuch is all law and little gospel.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO SECOND ORATION

PART II – THE OUTWARD FORMS OF THEOCRATIC LIFE (Dt 12-18)

DEUTERONOMY 12

From the inner spirit of theocratic life Moses now proceeds to the outer ordinances and ceremonies by which this inner commitment is expressed: “These are the decrees and laws ...” – laws pertaining to place of worship, idolatry, ceremonial requirements, etc. These would equate to the *mishpatim* of Exodus 21-23.

Chapter 12 emphasizes the one place of sacrifice for Israel.

v. 2-14 Moses gives directions first of all to destroy utterly all idolatrous shrines of the Canaanite cults. This points to one of the reasons for the centralization of Israel’s worship, that is to avoid contamination of the pure worship of the LORD.

Israel was to have one central sanctuary, which God would choose (v. 5).

v. 15-25 This centrality of place of worship does not prevent the killing of animals for ordinary meals throughout the land.

While Israel was still a compact camp in the wilderness, even the killing of animals for eating purposes was to be done before the tabernacle. This regulation (Lv 17) is now modified.

“But you must not eat the blood” (v. 16). The blood should be poured on the ground, because blood is the source of life and as such is reserved for sacrifice.

v. 26-32 The foregoing points are reviewed and emphasized once more, so that all syncretistic practices may be avoided.

Note: Negative critics see a contradiction between this chapter and Exodus 20:24 “Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come and bless you.” They say that the Exodus passage provided for a multiplicity of places of worship. They argue, therefore, that the Deuteronomy passage is a later modification, possibly inserted in Josiah’s day (2 Kgs 22:3-13).

Again this is trying to find “contradictions” where a simple understanding of the text shows that nothing of the kind exists. The Exodus passage was designed for Israel as it wandered from place to place. The tabernacle was the one place of worship wherever it might be. Wherever God caused his name to be honored (by special supernatural theophany), there Israel was to worship him.

Moreover, God gave special directives to others at various times to honor his name through sacrifice and worship (Israel at Ebal and Gerizim; Gideon at Ophrah etc.).

Deuteronomy 12 envisages a permanent site, such as was set up at Shiloh until it was destroyed (Jer 7:12) and then later in Jerusalem, culminating in the building of the temple of Solomon (Jos 18:1; Jdg 21:19; 2 Sm 7:1; 1 Kgs 5:4, etc.).

DEUTERONOMY 13

Cases of idolatry are mentioned, to be dealt with promptly as rebellion against the LORD.

False prophets claiming special revelations (v. 1-5), relatives enticing one to idolatrous worship (v. 6-11), entire cities serving other gods (v. 12-18) – all are to be cut off, exterminated, as if dealing with a cancerous growth.

In these cases (esp. the first two), one assumes that the law of proof by witnesses surely applied (Dt 17:6f).

We note the severity of punishment in all these cases! These were crimes that undermined society.

DEUTERONOMY 14

As the LORD's holy people Israelites are to avoid: disfiguring expressions of mourning, a common heathen practice (v. 1-2); eating unclean foods, such as are clearly specified (v. 3-21). They are to deliver tithes and offerings as proscribed. Note that v. 4 and 5 include a listing of edible animals not mentioned in Leviticus 11. Note also the admonition pertaining to cooking a young goat in its mother's milk (see Ex 23:19; 34:26).

Most of these ordinances coincide with those previously mentioned. Some see in v. 28 the prescribing of a "second tithe," and even a "third tithe," to be brought for charitable purposes. The passage itself isn't too clear to us, although undoubtedly it was understood at the time. In any case, it refers to the adding of a "poor tithe" (see Lv 27:30-33; Nu 18:21-32).

DEUTERONOMY 15

"There will always be poor people in the land" – v. 11. Israel's poverty program provided that all debts were to be cancelled at the end of every seven years (v. 1) and Hebrew servants freed if they so desired (v. 12-18). That which previously applied to the Jubilee Year (Lv 25) is now also applied to the sabbatical year. This institution gave a fresh start like the legal institution of bankruptcy.

Note the New Testament application in Mt 26:11, Mk 14:7, and Jn 12:8.

This practice "was designed to refurbish the theocratic symbol of the kingdom of God periodically by a fresh realization of the saving and restoring grace of the LORD which was experienced so abundantly at the beginning of Israel's theocratic life. At the same time it pointed prophetically to the future redemptive action of God, anticipating the Messianic reign of mercy to the poor and helpless (see Ps 72). This prospect is always present in sabbatical symbolism.

The subject of firstborn animals, previously mentioned in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, is here related to the law of the central altar. A few regulations are also added (v. 19-23).

DEUTERONOMY 16

The first part of this chapter closes the ceremonial portion of this section of Moses' second oration, in which he points to a "repetition and completion of the law." He discusses the feasts of Passover (vv. 1-8), Weeks or Pentecost (v. 9-12), and Tabernacles (v. 13-17), feasts at which "all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose" (v. 16).

Again this presentation presupposes the validity of what has already been prescribed in Exodus 12, Leviticus 23, and Numbers 28, condensing and omitting much, and stressing the observance of these festivals at the central place of the LORD's choice. In the case of the Passover, this would eliminate the smearing of door-posts with blood.

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With Deuteronomy 16:18 the civil portion of this section begins (see above). This contains a series of stipulations concerning theocratic government. Because of this unique theocratic arrangement, priests are also to play a part in judicial affairs. Also prophets declare the LORD's judgments upon his people. To our way of thinking, perhaps, the distinctions between moral, ceremonial, and civil law may not seem to be adhered to as strictly as they would be under an arrangement in which church and state are kept more separate. Already in this chapter, cultic proscriptions appear among judicial regulations (see 16:21-17:1).

Judges and officers are to be appointed at every place (v. 18-20).

DEUTERONOMY 17

The first place to try cases of breaking the law is the local court mentioned in the previous chapter. A specific case is mentioned (that of worshiping other gods), and rules of court procedure (investigation, proof, 2 or 3 witnesses, punishment) are explained (v. 1-7).

Cases "too difficult ... to judge" by local courts are to be taken to the higher court, administered by a priest, including the high priest (v. 12).

The next verses (v. 14-20) presuppose the time when Israel will have conquered Canaan and will be ready for a king "whom the LORD your God chooses."

This king is not "to acquire great numbers of horses" (v. 16), in other words, lust after military power; neither is he to "take many wives," nor "accumulate large amounts of silver and gold" (v. 17). Instead, he is to read a copy of the law of the LORD all the days of his life (v. 19).

Note the implications of 17:18 for the text and canon of Scripture.

Note: Israel's request for a king under Samuel (1 Sm 8:4ff) was not wrong in itself. A monarchy was not contrary to the principle of theocratic government, as this passage clearly shows. Other passages presupposed the same (Gn 17:6 and 16; 35:11; 49:10). It was the spirit in which the monarchy was later requested which was wrong, as we see from 1 Samuel. The kind of monarchy which emerged also left much to be desired, as we see especially in the case of Saul and in the latter years of Solomon's reign.

A king ruling under the LORD and by covenant law would actually enrich the Old Testament's symbolic prefiguration of the Messianic reign: one of their own brothers, humble, not controlled by earthly considerations, obedient to the LORD's will.

DEUTERONOMY 18

The first part of this chapter relates to the support and the rights of the priests (v. 1-8), and gives warnings against the detestable practices of heathen religions (human sacrifice, divination, witchcraft, spiritism) (v. 9-14). Dt 18:1 distinguishes between "priests" and "Levites." While all Levites were public ministers, not all Levites served directly in tabernacle (temple) worship.

The distinctions between the various terms for all sorts of occult practices and fortune-telling (v. 10-11) are not clear to us. Interpretation of the terms is based on etymology (as indicated by terms in parentheses below), Akkadian terms, or the Septuagint.

Divination

קִסָּם קִסְמִים practices divination; *μαντεύω*

מְעוֹנִן sorcery (clouds?)

מְנַחֵשׁ interprets omens (hiss?)

Magic

מְכַשֵּׁף engages in witchcraft, a general term in Akk.; *φαρμακεία*

חָבַר חָבַר casts spells (binder)

Contacting the Dead

שָׂאֵל אֹזֵב medium – is אֹזֵב the medium, the spirit, or a pit? *ἐγγαστρίμυθος*

יִדְעָנִי spiritist, (knower), *γνώστῆς*

דִּרְשׁ אֶל־הַמֵּתִים consults the dead

הִרְטָמִים may be an Egyptian term (cf. Gn 41:8).

This matter of false oracular prophecy leads into the subject of true prophecy (v. 15ff), and specifically to the coming of THE PROPHET (הַנְּבִיא), a prophet like Moses, coming from the midst of his own people. “You must listen to him” (v. 15).

This is expanded in the following verses, as the LORD declares: “I will put words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him” (v. 18).

That this prophecy was understood in the Messianic sense and formed part of the Messianic expectations of Israel is revealed in John 1:45; 4:25; 6:14; 12:48f; 17:5; Acts 3:22f; 7:37.

Note: The Hebrew word נְבִיא (most often translated “prophet”) in its basic meaning denotes “a spokesman, one who proclaims.” A true prophet of God was therefore one who proclaimed the word of God, a mouthpiece of God. (Archer associates this word with an Akkadian root, *nabu*, which means “summon, announce, call.”)

The priesthood served as guardians and promoters of the law particularly by the offering of sacrifices and service at the altar. The high priest also revealed the LORD’s will through the Urim and Thummim.

Moses here promises the sending of prophets to make known the counsel of the LORD,

distinguishing this true counsel from that of counsel obtained through heathen practices mentioned in Lv 18:9-13.

To restrict the following verses (v. 15-18), however, to the Old Testament prophets collectively (“Order of Prophets”) is a misinterpretation of this clear text.

When Moses says “like unto me” he refers to Christ, since there was no other prophet in the Old Testament like Moses (Dt 34:10, He 3). The New Testament passages referred to above clearly show this passage to be Messianic. Even the Samaritans, as Hengstenberg points out on the basis of John 4:25, founded their expectation of the Messiah on these words of Moses.

Muslims perversely apply this passage to Muhammad, who was from Israel’s “brothers,” the sons of Ishmael.

We note that in this section of Deuteronomy, especially chapters 17 and 18, the three principle offices of the Old Testament are referred to – priest/king/prophet. All three have Messianic significance in that they were perfectly fulfilled in Christ, who was anointed by God to be our great High Priest, Prophet, and King.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Dt 12-18)

1. In what way is Israel’s worship in Canaan to be different from heathen worship? (ch. 12)
2. Why is the directive to worship at a central place no contradiction from that specified in Ex 20:24?
3. What change would this centrality of worship necessitate as far as eating of meat was concerned?
4. Give several examples of cases cited in ch. 13 which were punishable by death. Why was this punishment so severe in these cases?
5. What regulations were reviewed in ch. 14?
6. Indicate a number of provisions in Israel’s “poverty program” (ch. 15).
7. What added factor does Moses emphasize as he once more reviews ceremonial laws relating to the firstborn, the celebration of festivals etc. (chs. 15 and 16)?
8. What kind of ordinances are taken up in ch. 17?
9. What kind of government is anticipated in this same chapter? What does this indicate as far as Israel’s later request for a king is concerned?
10. Explain the expression in ch. 18:1: “The priests, who are Levites – indeed the whole tribe of Levi ...”
11. What prophetic institutions are condemned in ch. 18?
12. What office has God himself accredited to counteract such detestable heathen practices? What important Messianic prophecy does Moses proclaim in this connection?

FOR ADDED CONSIDERATION

Cite a number of passages from the New Testament which clearly attest to the Messianic import of Dt 18:15 and 17.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE SECOND ORATION

CONCLUSION (Dt 19-26)

DEUTERONOMY 19

Having set forth the basic institutions for controlling civil affairs, Moses proceeds to various aspects of civil and family life, and how these rights are to be protected.

v. 1-13 Regulations pertaining to cities of refuge are reiterated and extended, particularly as these apply to the land west of Jordan.

v. 14 Landmarks (boundary stones) were to be inviolate. The land was the LORD's!

v. 15-21 The law of witnesses, previously enunciated for capital cases (Nu 35:30; Dt 17:6) is now given general application.

v. 19-20 These verses cite the deterrent effect of punishment.

DEUTERONOMY 20

This chapter could be entitled: "When Israel Goes to War" (v. 1).

v. 1-4 Don't be afraid! The LORD your God is fighting for you!

v. 5-9 Rules for military service are stipulated, especially as these apply to exemptions for those just getting situated or recently married.

v. 10-18 Towns outside of Canaan are to be offered terms of peace. Towns within Canaan, however, are to be completely destroyed.

The rule of **חָרָם**, devotion to the LORD, referred to previously (Lv 7:1-4; 12:31) is again emphasized.

v. 19-20 When besieging a town, spare the fruit trees, so the land will remain fruitful.

DEUTERONOMY 21-26

These chapters take up all sorts of situations pertaining to national, social, and family relationships, and prescribe how these are to be regulated among Israel as a covenant nation under God. Many of these situations are selected as examples that provide precedents, following one another without any special connection. To take up each situation in detail would go beyond the scope of this study. We call attention to items of special interest:

21:1-9 In this ritual to atone for unsolved murders Israel is to wipe away innocent blood. The community at the same time assumes the responsibility for an unsolved crime.

21:11 Does not apply to Canaanites, who are under **חָרָם**!

21:15-17 The right of primogeniture preserved in case of a polygamous marriage. (Note that the Mosaic law regulates such!)

21:18-21 Note the seriousness of disobedience to parents which undermines society.

21:22-23 A law strictly followed in later years (Jos 8:29; 2 Sm 21:10), also applied by Paul to Christ in Ga 3:13: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

22:1-12 Uphold the order of creation! Even fringes on a garment remind of God’s suzerainty (Nu 15:37-41). No unisex or cross-dressing in Moses’ time (v. 5)!

22:13-21 To our sensitivities this way of finding “proof” of a bride’s “virginity” by means of keeping the marks of first intercourse on bedclothes seems strange, if not crude. In ancient societies this seemed to have been customary. It provided protection against false accusations. Great importance was attached to the bride being a virgin!

22:25 “If out in the country” – where the girl can’t scream for help (cf. v. 24), as distinguished in the case of “in a town” (v. 23). Again, these unusual methods were simply used to regulate cases of adultery, which was punishable with death.

23:2 מְמוֹזֵר probably refers to a child of an incestuous relationship (not merely “bastard” as in KJV, or “one of illegitimate birth” as in NIV footnote).

23:3-8 Rules pertaining to acceptance of Ammonites and Moabites (descendants of Lot), Edomites and Egyptians into Israel’s assembly are outlined. Apparently an exception was made in the case of Ruth, a Moabite who became an ancestress of the Savior, or more likely the principle applies only to males becoming part of Israel, not to the brides of Israelites.

23:15 This was cited as the basis for the underground railroad for run-away slaves in pre-Civil War America.

23:18 “Male prostitute” – in Hebrew “a dog” (Re 22:15; also KJV).

23:19 “Do not charge your brother interest.” The loans in question are to meet basic needs. Interest could be charged of foreigners.

23:25 Law of property rights provided for the needs of travelers (Mt 12:1 – Jesus in a grain field on Sabbath). Africans still recognize such rights – but often these are abused!

24:1-4 Divorce, though permitted, is limited in the Mosaic law (see also Lv 21:7, 14; 22:13; Nu 30:9). It was permitted “because your hearts were hard,” as Jesus declares (Mt 19:8). “But it was not this way from the beginning” (see also Mal 2:13-16). Where civil and religious regulations were not separate, as under a theocratic rule, this provision was deemed necessary. The New Testament ideal proceeds from the way it was “from the beginning.”

24:6 The handmill was indispensable to the preservation of life. The upper stone missing would render the whole mill useless, thus endangering life. Hence the regulation.

24:19-22 Laws pertaining to charity and the practice of gleaning (See Ruth).

25:3 “Forty lashes” – cf. 2 Cor 11:24. This was the maximum. The practice was limited to 39 to avoid a violation of the law.

25:4 “Do not muzzle an ox ...” See 1 Corinthians 9:9 for the deeper principle being taught. This is application not allegory.

25:5-10 The Law of the Levirate insured succession of the family. The unmarried brother of a man who died childless had the duty of raising up an heir to the dead by his widow. Failure to comply betrayed a want of fraternal love and was publicly stigmatized (loosing of shoe, spitting in face in presence of elders). The taking off of the shoe was a custom to confirm commercial transactions. In this case, however, it signified disgrace when coupled with spitting in the face. Boaz’s application of the principle in Ruth 3 and 4 may have reached beyond the letter of the law.

25:17-19 Do not forget what the Amalekites did (Ex 17:9-16)!

26:1-15 Moses gives two closing ordinances pertaining to the delivery of first fruits and of tithes when Israel has entered Canaan.

26:5 “Aramean” – Patriarchal origins were geographically in Aram (North Syria).

26:16-19 Moses’ closing admonition to the Second Oration. Again we note Moses’ emphasis upon Israel’s obedience to the LORD’s commands as a demonstration that they are his people, “holy to the LORD,” as he promised.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Dt 19-26)

1. What provision for unintentional killing is renewed for the area west of the Jordan (ch. 19)?
2. What encouragement did Moses offer to Israel when they went into battle (ch. 20)? What rules applied to those in military service?
3. What distinction was to be made when attacking cities outside of Canaan over against those within the Promised Land?
4. At this point (ch. 21) Moses takes up legislation pertaining to national, social and family relationships within Israel as God’s covenant people. Summarize what provisions regulated the following?
 - a. an unsolved murder (21:1-9). What did God want to impress upon his people by means of this unusual ritual?
 - b. marrying a captive woman (21:10-14). Does this regulation give license to or give protection from sexual whims in cases of this kind?
 - c. the right of primogeniture in case of a polygamous marriage (21:15-17). Again, note allowance for polygamy! How do we explain this to those who argue that the LORD hereby “sanctions” polygamy?
 - d. the case of a rebellious son (21:18-21). Why so strict?
 - e. the body of a criminal hung on a tree (21:22-23). In what connection did Paul refer to this

ordinance?

- f. maintaining the distinction of sexes (22:5). What order does God want to be upheld in this as well as in succeeding ordinances (22:6-11)?
 - g. tassels on the cloak (22:12). Why? (cf. Nu 15:37-41).
 - h. questions relating to a bride's virginity (22:13-21). What do these regulations indicate concerning Israel's lifestyle?
 - i. cases of adultery (22:22).
 - j. the rape of a virgin in town (22:23-24).
 - k. the rape of a virgin in the country (22:25-27).
 - l. eunuchs; children born incestuously (23:1-2).
 - m. Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Egyptians (23:5-8).
 - n. prostitution (23:17).
 - o. charging interest (23:19-20).
 - p. eating the produce of another's field (23:24-25).
 - q. provisions for divorce (24:1-4). How did Jesus respond to questions relating to this matter (Mt 19:8; cf. also Mal 2:13-16)?
 - r. the law relating to theft of millstones (24:6). Why so important?
 - s. kidnapping (24:7).
 - t. harvesting a field (24:19). Where does this regulation come into consideration later on?
 - u. punishment by flogging (25:1-3). (see 2 Cor 11:24.)
 - v. oxen while treading out grain (25:4). In what connection did Paul make use of this? (see 9:7-12.)
 - w. the law of the levirate (25:5-10). Why was this of such importance in Israel? In what story was this law later on put into effect?
5. How was Israel to "remember the Amalekites"? Why? (Consider in this connection the story reported in 1 Samuel 15!)
6. With what reciprocal declaration does Moses bring his Second Oration to a close? What promise on God's part and what response on the part of the people are attached to these declarations?

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR THIRD ORATION (Dt 27-30)

DEUTERONOMY 27

This oration begins with instructions concerning how to ratify the law in a solemn manner in the land of Canaan after crossing over the Jordan.

Large stones were to be set up and covered with plaster. On these was to be written the Mosaic Law. The stones were to be set upon Mount Ebal. An altar also was to be built on Ebal, and offerings, both burnt

(עֹלָה) and fellowship (זֶבַח שְׁלָמִים), were to be brought (v. 1-8).

A stone platform has been identified on Mt. Ebal, which the excavator has identified as a ramped altar. Some have suggested that this is the altar built at this site by Joshua or a later altar erected as a memorial to that event, but this is speculative, and many archaeologists question whether the platform is even an altar. See *Biblical Archaeology Review*, January 1985; January 1986.

Upon Mount Gerizim the following tribes are to pronounce blessings: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin.

Upon Mount Ebal the following tribes are to pronounce curses: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali.

The blessings were pronounced by the sons of Jacob's wives; the curses, with the exception of Reuben and Zebulun, by the sons of handmaids. Reuben forfeited his right of primogeniture by incest. Zebulun was the youngest son of Leah.

The latter portion of Deuteronomy 27 is evidently not part of the curses and blessings spoken by the tribes, although each of verses 15 to 26 begins with the words "Cursed is the man ..." This section must have been a separate feature of the covenant, since Moses writes of these curses that they were recited to all the people by the Levites "in a loud voice." Some commentators have suggested that these verses are a piece of the liturgical form that was followed during the ceremony. In that case, these verses come only from the cursing part of the event, and the people who responded to the Levites would be the members of the tribes designated to speak the curses.

It is interesting to note that the curses pronounced by the Levites here include the basic provisions of the Decalogue: v. 15 applies the First Commandment; v. 16 the Fourth; v. 17-19 refer to love to one's neighbor; v. 20-23 relate to marriage and family concerns; v. 24 deals with the Fifth Commandment and v. 25 with the Seventh; v. 26 includes "the words of this law," bringing the curses to a close.

Whether the blessings or curses are repeated verbatim in the book of Deuteronomy itself is not of great importance. Moses not only speaks of specific blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 28 (v. 3-6 and 16-19), but also expands upon these in his closing exhortation, giving us the content of God's threats and promises to his people Israel.

DEUTERONOMY 28

In Chapter 28 the curses spoken by Moses predominate. They grow more intense, point farther into the future, forecasting the captivity in Babylon (v. 36), even presaging the siege of Jerusalem under Titus (v.

53), and mentioning the prospect of the Jews being scattered over the entire earth (v. 64). The future of Israel is outlined in bold, sweeping strokes, creating a basis for the utterances of the later prophets.

To use this chapter as evidence of later authorship is to ignore the plain references to Deuteronomy found in the later books (Jos 8:30ff compared with Dt 27:2ff and 11:29; Is 8 compared with Dt 17:14-20; Jr 34:8f compared with Dt 15:12; 2 Kgs 14:6 compared with Dt 24:16). It also fails to explain those prophecies which include and go far beyond the Exile (Dt 28:49f and v. 68 compared with Mt 24; Lk 19:43f).

DEUTERONOMY 29

In a direct, personal appeal to the generation standing before him, Moses confronts it with a demand for an oath of allegiance (v. 9-15). This he precedes with a reminder of the LORD's past works of salvation (v. 1-8). He follows his central appeal with a warning of the curses which would be visited on an unfaithful nation (v. 16-29).

The covenant itself had been concluded at Horeb by the offering of sacrifices (Ex 24). God had not abrogated this covenant, which had been preceded by a promise with an oath made to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (v. 13).

All of the people are now present – also children, wives, aliens (v. 10). “Today, in the presence of the LORD,” Moses declares fervently, “I am making this covenant not only with you, who are standing here with us ... but also with those who are not here today” (v. 14-15). It was for their descendants, yes, a covenant of blessing for all nations! (Ac 2:39; also Jn 17:20).

Failure to abide by the principles of this covenant will bring with it a curse of utter desolation, both upon the individual as well as upon the nation as a whole!

v. 4 The hardness of heart of the first generation was not absent from the second.

v. 5 The miracles of preservation extended beyond manna, water, and quail to their clothing and shoes.

v. 29 This verse is not to be understood in the Calvinist sense of a secret decree of election to salvation and damnation, but as an encouragement to cling to the revealed word.

DEUTERONOMY 30

Prophetically Moses had threatened a dispersion of Israel in the preceding chapter. Here he speaks of the people's dispersion and banishment as actually would take place in the future (v. 1-3).

But “the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back” (v. 4). He “will circumcise your hearts” (v. 6). “He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers” (v. 5).

These words obviously refer to the time of the Babylonian Captivity and the restoration which culminated in the fulfillment of the Messianic promise. Israel was to be gathered from out of all the countries of the earth – an application which is to be found in a spiritual Israel, whose hearts the LORD God would turn (Jr 31:33ff; 32:39ff; Eze 11:19; 36:26-27). As the development of this theme of Moses is taken up by the prophets, it shows the renewal and restoration as foretold by Moses to be accomplished by Christ in the establishment of the New Covenant.

v. 14 In these verse the availability of revelation applies to the law. In Romans 10 Paul applies the same

principle to the gospel.

Thus the alternative placed by Moses before Israel is on the one hand “life and prosperity,” and on the other “death and destruction” (v. 15).

“Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (v. 19-20).

v. 19 This verse is echoed in Isaiah 1. Isaiah is a very Deuteronomistic book.

Moses’ appeals do not imply a synergistic ability in natural man to choose God. They are appeals through which the Spirit works and appeals to believers to remain faithful. Only one who is spiritually alive can choose to remain alive.

Thus Moses closes his Third Oration, as eloquent a closing as one can find anywhere in Scripture. What a fitting farewell of an excellent leader! Words to be remembered – also in our day, and used in our day in similar circumstances.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Dt 27-30)

1. Where in Canaan was Israel to renew the covenant with the LORD?
2. Give details of this ceremony as to:
 - a. type of altar to be set up.
 - b. offerings to be sacrificed.
 - c. recording of the Torah.
 - d. arrangement of the tribes.
 - e. participation of the tribes in the ceremony.
 - f. special function of the Levites in the ceremony.
3. What material blessings does Moses promise to an obedient Israel?
4. What curses would the LORD send upon a disobedient Israel? How were some of these curses literally fulfilled?
5. Why do negative critics argue that much of this Third Oration must have been written at a later date than at Moses’ time?
6. Give some of the thoughts expressed by Moses (ch. 29) in his direct, personal appeal to the people to remain faithful to the covenant.
7. What Messianic hope is extended by Moses in the final part of his Third Oration (ch. 30)?
8. With which strong, personal appeal does this oration close?

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE LAST ACTS AND DEATH OF MOSES (Dt 31-34)

DEUTERONOMY 31

This final section of Deuteronomy records the last acts and the death of Moses.

Moses, at age 120 (v. 1), informs the people that Joshua is to be their leader (v. 7). He gives the law which he has written to the priests to read and keep. It is to be safeguarded, used to teach the people, and read every seven years in the year of canceling debt to remind the people of their covenantal privileges and obligations (v. 10-13).

The LORD confirms Moses' actions with his appearance in a cloud (v. 15). He predicts Israel's future idolatry and that he will hide his face "because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods" (v. 18). Moses is commissioned to write a song and "teach it to the Israelites" (v. 19). Not only the tables of the law, but the Torah written by Moses is to be preserved in the Ark of the Covenant (v. 26).

The preserved Book of the Law as well as the final "Song of Moses," which Israel was to sing in later years, along with heaven and earth invoked earlier, would serve as witnesses of the perfect righteousness of God, convicting the Israelites that whatever afflictions they would suffer would be a result of their own infidelity over against his precepts.

DEUTERONOMY 32 – THE SONG OF MOSES

v. 1-6 This is the preamble of Moses' song. When he speaks of "my teaching," he means literally "something given to me." Israel is to regard his song as coming from the LORD.

In v. 3-4 Moses identifies the God whose name he is declaring. He is the Rock (הַצּוּר), constant in his faithfulness.

In contrast to this "faithful God" Israel is characterized in v. 5-6 as corrupt, "a warped and crooked generation." Unfortunately Moses' words prophetically anticipate the future!

v. 7-14 This section is a historical prolog, recalling how the Most High chose Israel from among all nations, a helpless people, whom he guarded as the "apple of his eye" (Ps 17:8; Pr 7:2) and nurtured as "an eagle that stirs up its nest" (cf. Ex 19:4), showering his blessings upon this people.

v. 8 This verse has an interesting variant. Did God determine the allotment of the nations according to "the sons of Israel," leaving sufficient land for Israel, or did he determine it according to the "sons of God"? This would presumably refer to their angels (see Dn 10).

v. 15-33 In spite of God's goodness "Jeshurun" (יִשְׁרוּן, lit. the upright one, from יָשַׁר), "grew fat and kicked." The succeeding verses describe Israel's faithlessness, its idolatrous ways.

Because Israel made the LORD jealous by what is "no god" (לֹא־אֱלֹהִים), he will make Israel envious by those who are not a people (לֹא־עַם). Note the play on words! In other words, the heathen nations would

be used by the LORD to chastise Israel (Ro 10:19). The only reality behind the gods of the nations is that they are demons (v 17, 1 Co 10:20). Note the striking anthropomorphisms in v. 18 (God gives birth) and v. 27 (he dreads the enemy).

But the LORD would permit this “taunt of the enemy” to go only so far!

v. 34-43 “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the LORD (Ro 12:19; He 10:30). With these verses as a transition Moses proceeds to the last section:

A time of renewal will come! The LORD will show himself as the only true God, who puts to death and brings to life, who has wounded and will heal (v. 39).

With the Messianic promise of hope, all nations will rejoice in the deliverance which the LORD will bring. (That this closing verse is definitely Messianic is emphasized by Paul in Romans 15:10.)

v. 43 This verse has an interesting textual variant that affects Hebrews 1:6.

The chapter closes with the LORD’s word to Moses relating to his manner of death after having seen the promised land from Mount Nebo. This was because Moses failed to uphold the LORD’s holiness at the waters of Meribah.

DEUTERONOMY 33 – The Blessing of Moses

Keil comments that this blessing, like that of Jacob (Gn 49) contains “no special predictions, but simply prophetic glances at the future” (*Commentary*, p. 494).

The difference between the blessings of Jacob and Moses due to intervening events is apparent. The curse of dispersion in Israel upon Simeon and Levi is changed as far as Levi is concerned, because Levi stood by Moses’ side at Sinai even though this involved the denial of his own flesh and blood. Simeon, on the other hand, is ignored by Moses entirely (compare Gn 49:57 and Dt 33:8-11). Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh have already received their inheritance, and Moses takes this into consideration. In the case of the others he repeats many of the leading features expressed by Jacob. In these characteristics of Moses’ blessing we see an underscoring of its authenticity, which, as might be expected, is disputed by negative critics.

Specifically, the blessing of Judah “can hardly be understood in any other way ... than as founded upon the blessing of Jacob, and expressing the desire, that as Judah was to lead the way as champion of his brethren in the wars of Israel against the nations, he might have a prosperous return to his people.” Thus Targum Onkelos, Hengstenberg, and Keil interpret the words “bring him to his people” (v. 7). Luther interprets this phrase as “introducing Judah to the people which belongs to him by God’s appointment.”

Many of the other references are cryptic, partially understood in the light of fulfillment.

v. 2 This verse seems to be the source of the frequent references to the law being given through angels (Ps 68, Ac 7:53, Ga 3:19, He 2:2).

v. 6 This verse has the surprisingly common אֱלֹ / אֱלֹ variant.

v. 22 The translation is problematic. The NIV Study Bible note comments: “Another possible translation is ‘keeping away from the viper.’ Although someday he would be like a viper himself (see Ge

49:17), the early history of Dan pictured him as being somewhat more timid.”

v. 27 Note especially in Moses’ conclusion the beautiful expression: “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

DEUTERONOMY 34

After blessing the people Moses ascends Mount Nebo, where the LORD grants him the unusual ability to see the length and breadth of the promised land of Canaan (v. 1-4).

Many commentators explain the words “He (God) buried him (Moses)” to mean that the body of Moses did not see corruption. Moses’ subsequent appearance with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt 17:3; Mk 9:4; Lk 9:30-31) lends credence to this. See the interesting addition in Jude 9. Also that Moses did not die because of physical weakness, but by an act of God (v. 5-8).

The chapter closes with the statement that “since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses.” He was the founder and mediator of the Old Covenant this cannot be disputed. Only to the founder of the new and everlasting covenant Jesus Christ, belongs greater honor (He 3).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Dt 31-34)

1. What provision is made for a continuation of the law’s influence in Israel?
2. What provision is made for Moses’ successor?
3. In the “Song of Moses” (Dt 32) we have vivid poetry, striking pictures, and a prophetic glance at Israel’s entire history.
 - a. How does Moses refer to God in this song?
 - b. What pictures does he use to describe God’s care of Israel?
 - c. How is Israel described by way of contrast?
 - d. What pet name does Moses give Israel? its derivation? its import?
 - e. Explain the significance of the statements “no god,” “not a people.”
 - f. What hope is extended in the song toward the close?
4. The “Blessing of Moses” (Dt 33) gives another prophetic view of the tribes of Israel.
 - a. Of whose blessing does this remind us? In what ways?
 - b. Whose name is not even mentioned? Why? (Jos 19:2-9)
 - c. Which “scattered” tribe is singled out for special mention? Why?
 - d. Whose “double portion” is again emphasized?
 - e. In what way is the blessing of Judah connected with the blessing of Jacob?
5. With what account does Deuteronomy close (Dt 34)? Describe this event.

6. How would you answer those who say that Dt 34 argues against Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch?

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX NEGATIVE CRITICISM THE DOCUMENTARY PHASE

The divine authority of the Holy Scriptures has been under attack since the earliest centuries of Christianity. One need only think of the rise of Gnosticism in the second century, with its mystical and rationalistic approach to religion, which militated against any thought of biblical authority. The Ebionites denied parts of the Pentateuch. Origen's *Contra Celsum* (ca. 250 AD) is directed against the attacks of Celsus on Christianity and the Bible. Porphyry rejected Daniel's authorship of his book. Marcion rejected the authority of the Old Testament. Much of this early criticism was outspokenly anti-Christian in its very nature and purpose. Christianity itself was the subject under attack, and the attackers made it clear that they were the enemies.

The same is true of later Muslim critics in the tenth and eleventh centuries, who attacked the Scriptures as part of their efforts to defend Islam as the true faith (Ibn Hazm; Ibn Yashush – both ca. 1000). (Muslim apologists today find Christian critics of the Bible to be their best allies). Around 1100 the Jewish scholar Ibn Ezra denies Isaiah's authorship of parts of his book.

The Reformation, of course, emphasized strongly the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. Carlstadt's attacks upon the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch cannot be taken too seriously. With the rise of deism in Europe (Thomas Hobbes, 1588-1679), however, came the time of a more systematic critical approach toward anything which had to do with the absolute authority of scriptural truth. This provided a better climate for men like Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677), a Jewish pantheist, to attack outright the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and Richard Simon (1638-1712), a Roman Catholic priest, who questioned not only Mosaic authorship, but the authorship of all other Old Testament books as well.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries one sees a new development in negative criticism in the fact that more and more attacks against the previously accepted views of biblical authorship began to come from within the church itself, both Protestant as well as Roman Catholic. The Jesuits paved the way for this with their attacks on the clarity, sufficiency, and autonomous authority of Scripture in their Counter-Reformation attacks on *sola scriptura*. The Jesuits' attacks on Scripture and the anti-supernaturalism of the rationalists were two streams that nourished negative criticism of the Bible.

This negative criticism from within the church has flourished especially in the past several centuries on the part of "scholars" who maintain that one must approach the Bible "scientifically," "without presuppositions." This is impossible, of course, since one studies Scripture either with the presupposition of Christian faith or with the presupposition of sin-cloaked human reason.

The latter approach has led to a complete denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch by many professed Christians. It holds that the Pentateuch was compiled from a number of oral and literary strands which were given their final written form many centuries after the time of Moses. Though this criticism claimed to "treat the Bible like any other book," in fact the Bible was treated as guilty unless proven innocent.

We treat three general periods of negative criticism:

- I. The Documentary Phase (18th and 19th Centuries)

- II. The Form Critical Phase (20th Century)
- III. The Fragmentation of Critical Views (late 20th Century and beyond)

I. THE DOCUMENTARY PHASE – Its Development

There would not necessarily be anything wrong with a documentary hypothesis that proposed that Moses used documents in compiling the Pentateuch, a J source from Joseph, a P source from the patriarchs, perhaps even a D source from Noah pertaining to the Deluge. He could have had written genealogies from Esau and the Edomites (E). If this was nothing but a hypothesis, there would be nothing wrong with it, but it would very likely always remain unprovable and not particularly useful. We are not as interested in how Moses composed Genesis, as we are in what God has to say to us in it. The Documentary Hypothesis, however, is more than speculating about possible sources. It is a direct denial of the Bible's account of its origins and of its historicity.

This phase, after some trial and error attempts, arrived at the consensus that the Pentateuch is a fusion of four main documents, labeled Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), Deuteronomist (D), and Priestly (P). It was held that beginning in the 9th century BC these sources were independently composed and subsequently interwoven with one another. The final fusion and redaction are said to have taken place after Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity.

Gleason Archer defines the Documentary Hypothesis as follows: "The theory that the Pentateuch was a compilation of selections from several different written documents composed at different places and times over a period of five centuries, long after Moses" (*Survey*, p. 89).

We trace the development of this source criticism in its various stages as follows:

A. Early Documentary Hypothesis (E, J)

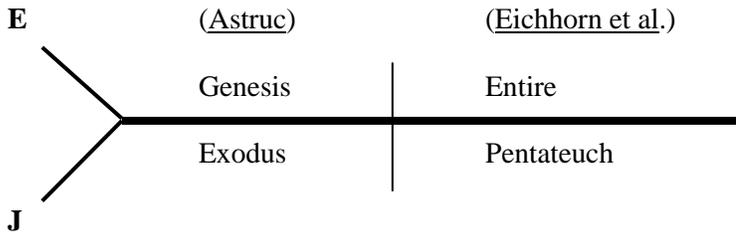
Jean Astruc (1684-1766) made the first serious attempt to divide the Genesis account, which allegedly had been compiled by Moses from two sources. These sources, Astruc claimed, were recognizable primarily in the occurrence of two different names of God: Elohim (E source), and Jehovah (J source).

It is possible that sources and authors may have favored different divine names. Job and his friends use the old patriarchal names for God. These faded in later books. The distribution of "Lord of Hosts" across the Old Testament is not uniform. The five books of Psalms differ in the use of the names God and Lord (this phenomenon eludes easy explanation as does the use of divine names elsewhere in the Old Testament).

Astruc did not deny Mosaic authorship, but by suggesting the need of Moses to rely on other sources for his "interpolations" in order to complete his work, Astruc sowed the seeds for source division.

This theory was taken up by Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752-1827). Eichhorn extended the J-E division to the entire Pentateuch. He took a much more negative view toward the inspiration and authority of Scripture. Obviously he was greatly influenced by the Age of Enlightenment sweeping over Europe, with its enthronement of human reason and revolt against any previously accepted authority in general, such as the church.

One might diagram this stage of source criticism as follows:



Although Mosaic involvement was still to a certain extent recognized by Eichhorn, Moses was held to have been a redactor of documents which had an origin somewhere else in Israel’s literary history. Astruc and Eichhorn are considered to be the leading representatives of this early documentary hypothesis, with Eichhorn earning the title of “Father of Old Testament criticism” for his more negative view.

Other factors began to come into consideration in this analysis of separate documentary sources, such as diversity of style, parallel accounts etc. Based upon the pre-supposition that other sources for the Pentateuch existed, Mosaic authorship was more and more abandoned, leading to the:

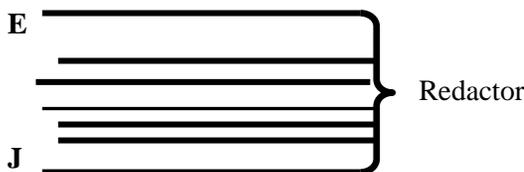
B. Fragmentary Hypothesis

Particularly Alexander Geddes, a Scottish priest of the Roman Catholic Church, came out with a critical work in which he proposed that the Pentateuch had been compiled by a single redactor from a mass of many fragments during the reign of Solomon (*Critical Remarks* – 1800). Geddes proposed two series of fragments based on the presence of divine names, and referred to Joshua as an “appendix” to the Pentateuch.

Johann Vater, a contemporary of Geddes, developed more fully this fragmentary hypothesis, adding the thought that the Pentateuch did not receive its final form until after the exile.

William Henry Green, professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, who defends the Mosaic authorship and the unified structure of the Pentateuch on the basis of its form and content (*The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*), calls the fragmentary hypothesis “the Document Hypothesis run mad.”

By means of a diagram this hypothesis might be portrayed as something like this:



Up to this point even though the sources of the Pentateuch were more fragmented by the critics, the distinction between the two names E and J still played a dominant role in their arrangement.

A reaction on the part of the critics over against this fragmentation led to the next development in critical analysis:

C. Supplementary Hypothesis

The supplementary theory assumed the existence of one basic document (*Grundschrift*) (E), which acquired additions and supplements by a later author (J), who left the basic material unaltered and incorporated it with his own. The basic document, according to this view, dated from around 1000 BC. Heinrich Ewald (1803-1875) is considered a leading proponent of this theory and even Franz Delitzsch in his Genesis commentary (1852) seems to favor the formulation of a basic Elohist document, to which other writings, including portions written by Moses, were “supplemented.”

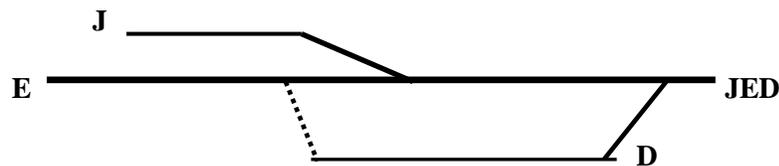
(Franz Delitzsch remained basically conservative. His son Friedrich, with whom he is sometimes confused, became a radical critic, known especially for his opinion that all of Israel’s religious literature came from Babylonian sources. Other defenders of the Bible in this period included Keil and Hengstenberg, though even Hengstenberg hedged on some points.)

Wilhelm Martin Leberecht DeWette (1780-1849) is listed by some historians as belonging to the fragmentary theorists, but in a limited way. In his doctoral thesis of 1806 he claimed that Deuteronomy must have come out of a later period, possibly at the time of Josiah’s reform (2 Kings 22), in an effort to centralize worship and unify his rule politically. Thus arose document D, separate from J and E. We therefore prefer to place DeWette with the supplementarians.

It is important in this connection to note again that the entire approach of Old Testament scholars led them to assume that Moses did not author the Pentateuch. DeWette, for example, denied the possibility of miracles, leading to his conclusion as stated in his *Einleitung in den Pentateuch*: “If it is conclusive for the educated mind that such miracles (as reported in the Pentateuch) did not really take place, one asks himself whether they probably appeared as such to the eye witnesses and participants; but that, too, must be denied ... and thus the conclusion is reached that the narrative was not contemporaneous, nor was it taken from contemporaneous sources.” This statement illustrates the anti-supernaturalistic presuppositions with which the negative critics approached the Pentateuch. Since they believed there were no such things as miracles, there could be no men such as Moses who wrote about such things out of personal experience.

Friederich Bleek (1793-1859) also comes out of this period. He was the first to propose the term Hexateuch, claiming that at King Josiah’s time (ca. 630 B.C.) an anonymous redactor of Joshua also incorporated the book of Joshua into his compilation.

One might illustrate the supplementary hypothesis as follows:



We note that up to this point the critics generally agreed on the existence of three basic documents: E/J/D.

D. Crystallization Hypothesis

William Henry Green describes this step as follows: “The nucleus of the Pentateuch, consisting of four primitive fragmentary treaties, was supplemented by a succession of ‘prophetic narrators,’ each of whom added his accretion, resulting in one continuous work” (*The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*).

Gleason Archer describes the “crystallization” process this way: “[This theory] regarded each successive contributor to the Mosaic corpus as reworking the entire body of materials, rather than simply adding his own isolated contributions here and there. Thus by successive layers or molecules, as sort of literary ‘crystal’ was built up” (*A Survey of OT Introduction*, p 92). We see how more and more emphasis is being placed on redactors.

It became apparent to these critics, in other words, that the Pentateuch must have been more than mere patchwork. As documents were “supplemented” some kind of editing process must have taken place. Heinrich Ewald, mentioned previously as a proponent of the supplement hypothesis, modified his position to become one of the first advocates of “crystallization.” August Knobel and Eberhard Schraeder proposed similar theories.

There were four basic layers with a thorough reworking at each stage. A simple illustration would exemplify the theory this way:



The presence of four basic documents was “refined” by the next step in the documentary process:

E. Modified Documentary Hypothesis (PEJD)

It remained for Hermann Hupfeld (1796-1866) to add this refining process in the quest for primary documents. The basic document (*Grundschrift*), he held, was the first Elohist, later known as the priestly code (P). Then came E² (Elohist), J (Jahwist) and D (Deuteronomic). Thus: P E J D! Hupfeld emphasized the work of a final redactor, who edited the corpus from Genesis through Numbers to adjust inconsistencies in divine names. Obviously much depended upon the work of this redactor!

At this point we now have four documents in the foreground, not as yet in the order adopted in the next stage of critical treatment, but ready for the final arrangement.

The arrangement of documents by Hupfeld might be illustrated something like this:

P (E¹) E (E²) J D

The final step in this documentary phase of negative criticism is known as the:

F. Development Hypothesis (often referred to as the Documentary Hypothesis)

The documentary theory, which began with Astruc one hundred years earlier, and which experienced a number of variations such as the fragmentary, supplementary, and crystallization

hypotheses, reached its climax in what is known as the Graf - Wellhausen hypothesis (sometimes also known as the Graf – Kuenen – Wellhausen hypothesis), so named after its chief protagonists.

The basic documents or components from which the Pentateuch was said to have developed were the four which Hupfeld emphasized as the “*Quellen*.” It remained for Karl Heinrich Graf (1815-1869) to rearrange the various documents as to their origin. Abraham Kuenen, a Dutch scholar, pursued Graf’s arguments further, and in 1870 published a work which also placed the order at J E D P.

Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), then, popularized this arrangement, restating this documentary theory with such skill and persuasiveness that it spread to Europe and America. Samuel R. Driver helped the theory gain wide acceptance in England, and in America its chief proponents were Charles A. Briggs, B. W. Bacon and R. H. Pfeiffer. This theory was expounded in *The International Critical Commentary* (ICC).

Wellhausen set forth the “development hypothesis” in his studies by showing how the alleged documents reflected an evolutionary reconstruction as a result of Israel’s development from primitive animism to a more sophisticated monotheism. This fit in with the spirit of the times, an age when Darwin’s evolutionary theories were capturing the fancy of the scientific world, and when Hegel’s dialecticism was setting the tone of contemporary philosophy. In order to be “scholarly” in that era, one had to be both anti-supernaturalistic and a proponent of evolution. One can hardly say that world-opinion has altered much in this regard.

It is interesting to note that Wellhausen drew the arguments for his development hypothesis from the laws and religious institutions of the Pentateuch, which he divided into three legislative codes:

1. The Book of the Covenant (Ex 20-24)
2. The Deuteronomic Code (Dt)
3. The Priestly Code (Ex 25:31; 35-40; Lv; portions of Nu)

In this respect Wellhausen separated what fit together in order to serve his evolutionary theories of Israel’s development in its religion from a period when it was a nomadic tribe (cf. Ex 20:22-24) to the time when it had a central place of worship, and when the book of Deuteronomy was presumably written and “found” in order to strengthen the worship of Yahweh at Jerusalem in a monotheistic form (Dt 12). The final Pentateuch source, the Priestly Code, was according to his theories written during the exile by a priestly hierarchy and put into practice as reported in Nehemiah chapters 8 to 10. During the exile, according to Wellhausen, Ezekiel (chs. 40-48) was especially instrumental together with other priests in codifying a hierarchical system (Holiness Code [Lv 17-26]) which became binding under Ezra and Nehemiah after the exile.

The new element at this time is the evolutionary view which joins the anti-sola scriptura attitude of the Jesuits and the anti-supernaturalism of the rationalists as the nourishing streams of criticism.

Summary of Wellhausen’s Documentary Theories:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| J | – | Written ca. 850 B.C. by an unknown writer in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. |
| E | – | Written ca. 750 B.C. by an unknown writer in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. |

Ca. 650 B.C. an unknown redactor combined J and E into a single document.

D – Composed as a part of Josiah’s reform, ca. 620 B.C.

P – Composed in stages during the exile and formally adopted under Ezra and Nehemiah in post-exilic times, ca. 444 B.C.

The entire corpus was revised and edited to form the Pentateuch (ca. 200 B.C.).

Summary of Wellhausen’s Evolutionary Views

	Lit.	Society	Religion	Law
1.	J E	primitive, tribal, semi-nomadic (Judges)	free, unorganized, natural worship at many local shrines; monolatrous at best	Book of the Covenant Ex. 20:22 – 23:19 (esp. 20:24)
2.	D	monarchy (Samuel, Kings)	prophets, the real founders of Israelite religion, advocate strict monotheism; God personal, not national; ethical, not natural; worship centralized	Deuteronomic Law (esp. 12:1-7)
3.	P	ecclesiastical hierarchy in post-exilic times	cultus end in itself; denatured, formulistic worship; fraudulent ancient setting created to give it authority	Priestly Code Ex 25-31; 35-40; Lv and legal portions of Numbers

As you can see from the chart above, Israelite history as far as Wellhausen was concerned began with primitive, semi-nomadic tribes wandering around in and about the land of Canaan. The Book of Judges contained the earliest history we know about Israel. All events which were reported to be earlier than that were either imaginative legends related by Israelite storytellers or fraudulent ancient frameworks manufactured to give authority to later institutions and laws. Wellhausen refused to believe that any reliable, historical information could be gleaned from the Pentateuch.

Up to this time documents had been dated largely on literary grounds. Now evolutionary ideas about the development of religion from animism to polytheism to henotheism/monolatry to monotheism became a criterion of dating. (The highest evolution, of course, would be to atheism or pantheism). A distinction between prophetic and priestly religion also became a factor.

Wellhausen placed P late because he saw legalistic priestly religion with its emphasis on law, sin, and atonement as a degeneration from early prophetic religion that emphasized social morality.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What basic difference arose in 17th and 18th century criticism of Mosaic authorship over against that which was carried on prior to that time?
2. What basic fallacy lies in the thinking of those who claim to approach the study of Scripture “without presuppositions”?

3. Name the three general periods of negative criticism and the time period of each.
4. Outline briefly the thought process governing each of the following hypotheses in the documentary phase of negative criticism:
 - a. Early Documentary
 - b. Fragmentary
 - c. Supplementary
 - d. Crystallization
 - e. Modified Documentary
5. Into which of the above stages does each of the following fit:
 - a. Eichhorn
 - b. Hupfeld
 - c. DeWette
 - d. Astruc
 - e. Geddes
 - f. Ewald
6. By what added concept were these documentary hypotheses refined and popularized by Wellhausen?
7. Give the basic conclusions of Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis as to:
 - a. Basic documents
 - b. Time of each document
 - c. Place of origin of each document
 - d. Final redaction
8. Summarize Wellhausen's views as to the evolutionary development of Israel's religion.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN THE DOCUMENTARY PHASE EXAMINED

Negative criticism, as we have shown:

- a. claims to place the Bible and its study on the same level as of any other book (it really does not);
- b. is anti-supernaturalistic in its interpretation of Scripture, denying miracles as well as predictive prophecy
- c. believes in an evolutionary process in the development of religion – from the primitive to the more sophisticated.

Is there any point in trying to “disprove” the theories of negative critics by means of “reasonable argument,” especially since they approach Scripture from presuppositions which are basically different from those of people who study Scripture with Spirit-wrought faith?

One wonders, of course, why the critics have spent so much time with a book that in their estimation is basically no different from any other, even possibly a pious forgery used for propagandistic purposes. The fact remains that these people have not only put an immense amount of “scholarly” effort into their studies of scriptural texts, but they have captured the fancy of those within nominal Christianity who have tried to compromise biblical teachings with critical views.

We have, for example, men like Samuel Rolles Driver (1846-1914) who brought Wellhausen’s views to England (*Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*), and Charles Augustus Briggs (1841-1913), who in the *International Critical Commentary*, which he edited with Driver, spread the “assured results” of the historical critical method to every verse of the Bible. We have the classic *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, edited by Brown, Driver, and Briggs, with its frequent references to JEDP passages. We have the opinion of Emil F. Kautzsh, well known Old Testament Hebraist and grammarian, who stated: “The Graf-Wellhausen theory is absolutely irrefutable.”

It seemed as though Wellhausen and his radical theories had carried the day. Much of recognized “Christian” scholarship took it for granted that the Pentateuch’s origin was to be found in Wellhausen’s theories rather than in Mosaic authorship. It was simply a matter of placing this development under the guidance of God. It was the “scholarly thing to do.” Perhaps God had something to do with its origin. But in their opinion that didn’t mean that Moses had to be the Pentateuch’s author!

A. Wellhausen’s Views of History Challenged

Gradually, however, Wellhausen’s claims began to be challenged – not only by conservative scholars, but by critical students as well. Wellhausen, for example, in expounding his evolutionary theories made much of the premise that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because Moses antedated human writing. This contention has since Wellhausen’s time been thoroughly discredited by archeological discoveries. With the decipherment of Egyptian around 1820 and Akkadian around 1850, it soon became apparent that “canonical scriptures” of the religions of these people were being transmitted long before Moses. Not only did law codes discovered from that period exist, but their formulation showed a marked similarity in structure with elements of the Mosaic law-code as recorded in the Pentateuch. Moses comes much later

than the early phase of writing, but he connects closely with the early history of the alphabet. The Pentateuch may be the first major literary work composed in alphabetic writing.

In response, W.F. Albright, who was recognized as the leading Biblical archaeologist of the first half of the 20th century could say:

Until recently it was the fashion among biblical historians to treat the patriarchal sagas of Genesis as though they were artificial creations of Israelite scribes of the Divided Monarchy or tales told by imaginative rhapsodists around Israelite campfires during the centuries following their occupation of the country ... Archaeological discoveries since 1925 have changed all this. Aside from a few die-hards among older scholars, there is scarcely a single biblical historian who has not been impressed by the rapid accumulation of data supporting the substantial historicity of patriarchal tradition (*The Biblical Period From Abraham to Ezra*, p. 1-2).

Albright was the leader of a school known as Biblical Archaeology. This school is no longer in vogue as we will see below.

B. Wellhausen's Dating of the Sources Challenged

Yehezkel Kaufmann (1889-1963), also a rationalistic critic, acknowledged the existence of primary sources of the Pentateuch (JE, D, P), but he disagreed sharply with Wellhausen as to the dating of these sources. In his *Religion of Israel* (1937-1956) Kaufmann presents the following points:

1. All material in the Pentateuch is very ancient, even pre-monarchial. Therefore it is earlier than and independent of the literary prophets whom classical Wellhausianism credited with the creation of monotheism. Kaufmann ascribed the beginning of monotheism to Moses.
2. The evolutionary sequence and literary dependence of the three law codes as assumed by Wellhausen is without foundation. They are rather the products of three separate schools, crystallizing at different times, and all having their foundation in the common legal tradition of the ancient Near East.
3. Deuteronomy is the last piece of Pentateuchal literature to be written. Following D only the editing of the works and the formulation of the Pentateuch as a book took place. This means that contrary to Wellhausen P is older than D. To support his view that P also was written very shortly after the time of Moses Kaufmann stated that the festival laws are pre-D, as are the sacrificial laws of Lv 17. Moreover, in P Israel in the wilderness is pictured as an armed camp true to Moses' day, and not as a church of post-exilic times. And finally the priest is subservient to the prophet-leader, also a condition which did not exist in post-exilic times.

C. Wellhausen's Theory of Sources Challenged

Umberto Cassuto (1883-1951), in his book, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch*, 1941, vigorously opposed the entire documentary theory. He pictured the theory as standing on four pillars, which he then proceeded to destroy as follows:

- a. The Divine Names – It can be shown that the names may be used for their different

meanings, not because of sources.

- b. Language and Style – Linguistic disparities, in so far as they really exist, can be explained with the utmost simplicity by reference to the general rules of the language, its grammatical structure, to lexical usage, and its literary convention – general rules that applied equally to every Hebrew writer and every Hebrew book.
- c. Contradictions and Divergences – These are inescapable in a multi-faceted book such as the Torah. Source criticism does not solve them.
- d. Duplications – These “stem from the Semitic practice of using parallelism in order to give emphasis and prominence to an idea.”

Matters here are not nearly as simple to explain as Cassuto implies, but he does show that Wellhausen’s hypothesis is just one of many plausible explanations.

Robert Dick Wilson (1856-1930), professor of Semitic Philology at Princeton Theological Seminary in *A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament* (p 103, 126) stated:

It is just as unrealistic to claim a difference of authorship on this basis (difference of style in various parts of law codes of Pentateuch) as it would be to say that John Milton could not have written both *Christian Doctrine* and the *Areopagitica*, or that Whitman and Longfellow, who differed so greatly in style, could not have lived in the same poetic era.

D. Wellhausen’s Theory of Composite Accounts Challenged

Wellhausen’s claim that certain narrative accounts (such as the flood story) originated independently and were later woven together by a “redactor” into one story, have obviously in the light of later analysis been shown to be manufactured “proofs” of separate accounts to support a hypothesis.

William Henry Green (*The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*) gives a demonstration how practically any story (e.g. The Prodigal Son) can be treated in a similar way. Finally it all depends upon what one wants to “prove,” and how much can be “solved” by an unidentified redactor!

E. The Alleged Continuity of Each Source was challenged

See the exercise on the Flood Narrative attached to this chapter.

Prominent conservative critics of the documentary hypothesis in America during this period and the following decades include J. Gresham Machen, R. D. Wilson, W. H. Green, Oswald Ellis, and Edward J. Young.

For a summary of scholars and their theories which contradicted all or part of Wellhausen’s Documentary Theory in the 20th century read chapter 7 in Archer, *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century*, p. 99-112.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What are the basic differences between the historical-critical approach to Scripture and our own

approach?

2. Although “reasonable argument” from such basically different approaches may be “fruitless,” we can be aware of some of the chief inconsistencies in the Wellhausen theory which even later negative critics will agree to.

What about these claims of Wellhausen:

- a. Moses antedated written covenants.
 - b. The use of different names for God prove different source documents.
 - c. Duplicate accounts of the same event prove different source documents.
 - d. Variations in style in law codes between parts of Exodus and parts of other books of the Pentateuch prove different authorship of these codes.
 - e. The law-code of Exodus 20-24 is less extensive than law-codes found in other parts of the Pentateuch, especially in Deuteronomy for example, and therefore reflect a less developed form of religion.
 - f. The elaborately detailed priestly codes in Leviticus, especially the Holiness Code, must have been developed at a later time in Israel’s history, perhaps during the exile, and codified under Ezra and Nehemiah.
 - g. The difference between Exodus 20:22-26 and Deuteronomy 12:1-14 proves conclusively that Israel’s form of worship developed from the primitive to the sophisticated.
3. Since many of the original premises of the Documentary Hypothesis have been proved to be unsound even by the negative critics, is there any value in continuing to study the documentary phase of biblical criticism?

FOR ADDED CONSIDERATION

Study Questions on the Workings of Source Criticism and the Problems it Faces

(Most of the quotations in this section are from the Genesis commentary of John Skinner in *The International Critical Commentary* series). The section of the text we are going to look at is the Flood narrative, Gn 6:5-9:17. Of this section Skinner says: “The resolution of the compound narrative into its constituent elements (J and P have interwoven accounts here) in this case is justly reckoned amongst the most brilliant achievements of purely literary criticism, and affords a particularly instructive lesson in the art of documentary analysis” (p. 148).

The generally accepted source division by critics is as follows:

J	–	6:1-8	7:1-5	7 (8,9) 10	12	16b	17b	22-23
P	–	9-22	6	11	13-16a	17a	18-21	

J	–	2b-3a	6-12	13b	20-22		
P	–	7:24-8:2a	3b-5	13a	14-19	9:1-17	

1. With this verse division what differences are there between P and J with regard to the source of the flood waters, the length and extent of the Flood and the number of animals on the ark?
2. If 7:16b belongs to J, what problem arises in the J account? If it belongs to P where it fits, why are these remarks (concerning the use of “Jahweh” by P) made by Franz Delitzsch illegitimate for a man who used source criticism: “It is certainly with intention that the ‘Jahweh’ of the original document is left unaltered. This shutting in was an act of condescending kindness, a proof of love on the part of God, who is thus interested in the matter”? (Skinner does the same with ch. 2 and ch. 3:1-5.)
3. One sign of a legitimate source is its continuity when separated out. Can you see any gaping holes in the J account? How do you suppose the critics explain these holes? But what does the redactor do differently with his sources in 6:17 – 7:5?
4. What is the redactor doing in 7:8 if the mention of clean and unclean animals belongs to J, but the phrase, “male and female,” belongs to P?

Obviously, the redactor solves all problems for the critics, but he is a strange, inconsistent individual who acts in whatever way the critics need him to act. (See W.H. Green, *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*, p 86-87, for fitting comments.)

See also Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Documentary Hypothesis in Trouble,” *Bible Review*, Winter 1985, p 22-32

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

To illustrate that the documentary theories are by no means a dead issue, the following is an excerpt from a recent commentary on Exodus and the book’s analysis of Exodus 4:18-31:

The sources are principally J and E. The inconsistency between 18 and 19 indicates clearly the presence of two sources. 24-26 is assigned to J as one of the most ‘primitive’ passages in the whole of the Pentateuch, and 19-31 relate the carrying out of instructions given in 3:16ff, with the name of Aaron as a secondary insertion. E is recognizable in 20b by the ‘rod of God’, and in 27-28 by the ‘mountain of God’ and other evidence.

21-23 present problems in source analysis as well as interpretation. Most critics assign verse 21 to E and verses 22-23 to J. However, verse 21 has some marks of P: the Hebrew word for ‘miracles’ (*mopetim*) is used elsewhere in Exodus only by P (7:3,9; 11:9-10); the word describing the hardening of heart of Pharaoh is used by both P and E (see comment on 7:3). Yet there is apparently no P material in 3:1-6:2. The words in verse 23 by which Moses demands the release of Israel are similar to those employed by J in the plague narratives (7:16; 8:1,20; 9:1,13; 10:3), but it is only in this section within the entire OT that Israel is called the first-born of Yahweh (used of Ephraim in Jr 31:9). It is quite possible, as some scholars have suggested, that verses 22-23 originally stood before 10:28 or 11:4 as J’s introduction to the tenth plague; the natural place for them would be between the first nine plagues and the tenth plague (the tenses in verse 22 are more accurately rendered: ‘and I said’ and ‘you have refused’). These two verses may have been removed to their present place by a redactor in order to indicate what he took to be the purpose of the series of ten plagues, for they attach easily to verse 21.

The source analysis here is as follows: *J* – 4:19-40a, 22-26, 29-31; *E* – 4:18, 20b, 21, 27-28

From: *The New Century Bible Commentary, Exodus*, J.P. Hyatt. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971, p 6; 1980, p 86-87.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

FORM CRITICISM

(Formgeschichte)

The rise of form criticism took place in Old Testament studies because of growing dissatisfaction with the limitations on what the source critical scholars were willing to study and the results which were derived from that study. Wellhausen and his disciples had been satisfied with dating the sources which they perceived to be behind the received text of the Pentateuch, based on their preconceived ideas of an evolutionary view of Israel's historical development. They were not apparently interested in looking for what might lie behind these written sources. Form criticism tries to reach back to the oral sources behind the documents. It emphasizes the genre and original setting of those oral sources.

Herman Gunkel, Pioneer of Old Testament Form Criticism

Herman Gunkel (1862-1932), who is considered the "father of Old Testament form criticism," rejected the emphases of source criticism. He maintained that the source critical scholars did not go far enough. In the introduction to his Genesis commentary, which later was published separately as *The Legends of Genesis*, 1901, (all further quotes of Gunkel are from this work) he said:

Since the sources of the Elohist and the Jahvist were written down in the ninth or eighth centuries B.C., some commentators have been disposed to think that the legends themselves originated in the main in the age of the Israelite kingdom and furnished, therefore, no revelation of primitive history. But in reality these legends are much older (p 23).

It wasn't that Gunkel denied the theories of source criticism. In fact he praised Wellhausen for what he considered to be the correct dating of the sources and declared, "The fixing of the date of P coming from the time of the exile is one of the surest results of criticism." He just believed that this documentary stage was the latest and least exciting of Israel's literary history. During the written stage of Israelite literature, which he felt began in the early stages of the period of the judges, nothing new happened. He described the J and E writers as nothing more than "tradition collectors," and the P writer as one who in his monotonous, dry, unpoetic, rigid and colorless style actually misused earlier sources to suit his purposes. Of P he said, "It appears clear that P dealt very arbitrarily with the tradition as it came down to him ... He abused it" (p. 153).

Saga and Myth according to Gunkel

According to Gunkel the real action in Israel's literary history took place during a long oral period which preceded the time of written sources. Using theories which he had developed in his study of German folk tales, he insisted that this literary development followed certain unwritten, yet strict laws. Unfailingly, such a primitive society (as Israel's was imagined to be before the judges) would try to explain the origin of things with myths.

Gunkel defined a myth as a story about the gods which tried to answer universal questions.

Furthermore, Israel would attempt to relate its history in stories which Gunkel called legends or sagas. The literary development of these sagas also was supposed to follow certain set, though unwritten, rules. They began as brief tales about heroes or ancestors of the tribe. It wasn't unusual for the same tales to be told about different people in different settings, as in the case of both Abraham and Isaac saying that their wives were their sisters. Gradually all kinds of legendary details and miraculous events were added to

these tales. Finally, all the legends about one individual were gathered together into a story-cycle. Even the grouping of these stories into story-cycles was first made in the preliterate stage, a product of the storyteller's art rather than the author's pen.

Saga and History according to Gunkel

By definition such sagas were not proper vehicles for a true and accurate reporting of history. According to Gunkel, "Legend weaves a poetic web around historical memories and hides the circumstances of time and place." He believed that exact recording of events was beyond the ability or desire of prehistoric societies, and whereas sagas are not lies, they contain only a small kernel of objective truth, a faint memory of some event or individual in the distant past. Furthermore, while history is usually written and fixed, saga is oral and corruptible. History has as its reporter an eye-witness or one directly in contact with an eye-witness, whereas saga relies on popular tradition and imagination. Gunkel's estimation of historical reality in the Pentateuch was almost as low as Wellhausen's, and it is not surprising to hear him say:

Even if there had once been a leader by the name of Abraham, as is generally believed, and who conducted the migration from Haran to Canaan, this much is beyond question with everyone who knows anything of the history of legends, that a legend cannot be expected to preserve throughout so many centuries a picture of Abraham. It is the religion of the narrator (p. 122).

Gunkel further distinguished saga and history by their opposing views of God. In sagas God directly intervenes in the everyday affairs of people. In true historical accounts he exerts only a vague and distant control. Therefore, if God speaks, performs a miracle, or in any way directly alters history in a story, it must be treated as a saga. This rule was based on Gunkel's view of God:

We believe that God works in the universe in the silent and secret background of all things; sometimes his influence seems almost tangible, as in the case of exceptionally great and impressive events and personalities; we divine his control in the marvelous interdependence of things; but nowhere does he appear as an operative fact or beside others, but always as the last and ultimate cause of everything (p. 9).

With these views and theories Gunkel turned to the narratives of Genesis. He claimed that from the received written text he would be able to break up the account into its original shorter stories which in the oral stage of Israelite literature existed and were recited independently. After studying the text Gunkel claimed to find no pure myths in Genesis. Israelite monotheism would not tolerate it. He felt that much of the material in the first eleven chapters and even the origin of the patriarchs, however, could be traced back to myths originally borrowed from the Babylonians.

Sagas Classified according to Gunkel in Genres (*Gattungen*)

Gunkel claimed to find many sagas in Genesis. Not only did he identify them, but he also attempted to classify them according to their genres or types. From these types we should know what to expect of a particular saga and its original use. According to Gunkel the following types exist in Genesis:

1. Historical – relating historical occurrences (migrations)
2. Ethnographic – descriptions of race and tribal relations
3. Aetiological – gives purpose or explanation for something
 - a. Ethnological – gives reason for relationship of tribes
 - b. Etymological – explains place name, often incorrectly

- c. Ceremonial – explains reason for religious ceremony
 - aa. real – passover
 - bb. imagined – limp dance at Penuel
(such types help us construct the history of sacred places and religious customs)
- d. Geographical – explains origin of certain places

Actual sagas might be a combination of the above types.

Historical Setting in Life (*Sitz im Leben*) according to Gunkel

Gunkel also believed that although sagas had little to say about actual history, they spoke volumes on the culture, literary development, and religious beliefs of the people who recited them in various ages of Israelite history. From these sagas one could discover the setting in life (*Sitz im Leben*) of the narrator. Some sagas entered the written text in a very early and primitive form. Others were preserved in a later, more developed form which Gunkel called a romance. Some sagas were preserved in writing in several different stages of development, thereby offering us a picture of Israel's historical development (the classical example of Genesis is the three stories of the patriarchs lying about their wives). Such sagas, then, by means of their *Sitz im Leben* provide us with a basic history of ancient Israel. This was one of Gunkel's basic themes.

Other Early Form-Critical Scholars

Hugo Gressmann (1877-1927) carried Gunkel's work beyond Genesis into Exodus and Numbers (*Sage und Geschichte in den Patriarchenerzaehlungen*, 1910). He claimed that the figure of Moses had been overlaid with elements of a supernatural nature, leading from oral tradition into a final form of "wonder tales."

Sigmund Mowinckel (1884-1965), the father of Scandinavian critical research, did most of his work in the Psalms (see the Middler Psalm notes, introduction), an area which also occupied much of the time of Gunkel. Mowinckel's theories depended heavily on the existence of an annual Enthronement Festival for which there is no evidence.

Following Mowinckel the Scandinavian school took a rather extreme position on oral tradition. Henrik Nyberg in 1935 stated that transmission from generation to generation in Israel was primarily oral. He and Johannes Pedersen (1883-1977) felt that the written Old Testament was a creation of the post-exilic Jewish community. Nyberg wanted to direct his attention to the "organic growth and transformation of living materials," rather than on corruption of written texts. Ivan Engnell (1906-1964) criticized Wellhausen and the source theory for trying to separate written sources. He rather saw two collections, P and D, preserved by diverse circles of traditionalists, and only receiving a P or D point of view in a late written form.

Present Day Form Criticism

The present state of Old Testament form criticism is presented in a series of volumes entitled, *The Forms of the Old Testament Literature* (Eerdmans). The purpose of the series is to identify the genre of all Old Testament literature along with its component parts. The volume on Genesis, written by George W. Coats, gives the same purpose for these volumes as Gunkel gave for his study, not history since this cannot be discovered from the narratives of Genesis, but an appreciation of the different genres or types of literature in Genesis and a knowledge of what we can rightfully expect from them.

There is an important new emphasis here, however, which is missing in earlier works. Coats uses the word “saga”, but in the sense in which Gunkel would have spoken about saga-cycles, as a long, prose, traditional narrative. This definition implies a criticism of Gunkel which the author spells out:

The implication of the definition is that those larger units previously labeled ‘saga cycles’ have far more cohesion than suggested by the term ‘cycle’. That cohesive narrative carries an intrinsic function for the society that produced it and ought not to be represented simply as a redactional collection of totally distinct and independent sagas (p. 5):

In other words, even if the separate portions of the literary unit may have had some previously independent existence and purpose, the man who combined them for the people of his day made them into a cohesive unit in order that he might present to them a unified message. This kind of understanding comes much closer to our view based on the testimony of the rest of Scripture that Moses may have used preexisting material in Genesis which was transmitted to him in ways of which we are unaware, but under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he combined them to reveal God’s saving activity to his readers.

Coats goes on to say:

The goal of form criticism was initially described as an adequate definition of the smallest, originally distinct and independent unit that lived in the oral tradition of the people. Yet, it is necessary to recognize that those small tales lie deeply buried in larger narrative and often can be recovered only with an alarming degree of hypothetical reconstruction. Indeed, parallels to the primeval saga now suggest that the small tale may not have had an independent role to play apart from its position in the larger saga (p. 38).

It seems that the form-critic no longer has the confidence he had in past years to simply tear the text apart into what he claims to be able to identify as its original oral units, but has to admit that the individual parts are units which derive their reason for being from their position in the entire work.

Foundations of Sand

Form criticism, even more than documentary criticism, lives in a world of the scholars’ imagination rather than the real world of the ancient Near East in which the Bible was created. It rose after the renaissance of knowledge of Near Eastern literature, but it ignores the data from the literature that is pertinent to the topic.

1. In the world in which Israel lived, societies had been transmitting their religious texts in writing for centuries by the time of Moses. If Israel was not transmitting its religious texts in writing in the 2nd millennium BC, they were the only culture in the neighborhood that was not doing so.
2. In the 2nd millennium BC learned scribes in Canaan were reading the Epic of Gilgamesh in the Akkadian original, and they were writing correspondence in Akkadian.
3. The Israelites’ neighbors to the far north at Ugarit were transmitting the myths of Baal and other deities in writing in the 2nd millennium BC. The music of their “psalms” was also transmitted in written form.
4. In the societies of the ancient Near East horizontal transmission of religious knowledge was oral, that is, priests or scribes read or recited the texts to the people, many of whom may have been illiterate. But literacy in a society which had alphabetic writing was accessible to many people, as the graffiti of the time show. The big barrier to wider distribution of texts was the cost of books, not the difficulty of literacy.

5. In the societies of the ancient Near East the vertical transmission of religious knowledge (transmission from generation to generation of teachers) was by written documents.
6. Analogies from Native American and Viking societies are inappropriate since they are very different societies than the milieu in which Israel lived. In almost all societies before the 19th century 90% of the people were farmers who lived on the land, but in the ancient Near East, classical Greece and Rome, and medieval Europe there were scribal classes that transmitted the religious texts of the society in writing.
7. It is very doubtful if there were ever oral forms of such genres as law codes, royal annals, and so on. Such forms as coded acrostics and sequence acrostics obviously were written to be viewed in writing. The point of the format is not at all apparent when the text is heard but not seen.
8. It is very difficult to assign texts to neat genre classifications, since most psalms and parables, for example, fall into multiple categories.

The theological sin of form criticism is that it despised the authority of Scripture. The academic sin of form criticism is that it ignored the data most relevant to its research and substituted imagination and conjecture for data.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Why were the disciples of form criticism dissatisfied with the hypotheses of Wellhausen?
2. What in Gunkel's opinion was more important than the documents (JEDP) themselves?
3. How did Gunkel distinguish between a "myth" and a "saga"?
4. Give an example of a story in Genesis which according to Gunkel had a mythological background? Did a saga according to Gunkel give an accurate report of history?
5. What example did he use to show how a saga (legend) developed from a more primitive story to a more sophisticated one? How would you answer his claim?
6. Although an "Abraham story" may according to Gunkel have contained only a "kernel of history", what greater importance did this story hold for him?
7. What did Gunkel attempt to do with the various genres or types (*Gattungen*) of sagas in Genesis?
8. What are some of the types which he distinguished?
9. What could be learned from a careful study of sagas even though they did not accurately report history as such?
10. Name some of the form critical scholars who followed Gunkel.
11. How does George W. Coats try to "improve" on Gunkel?
12. In what respect do Coats' theories come closer to our own view of Scripture?
13. In what way was form criticism build on foundations of sand?

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

RECENT TRENDS OF

HISTORICAL CRITICISM

TRADITIO-HISTORICAL CRITICISM

The school of tradition-historical criticism is really an outgrowth of form criticism. Some people classify it as only a subpart of the form critical school. Its proponents are also interested in biblical literature in its supposed oral form before it was written down. But it focuses not so much on the material that was transmitted (*traditum*), as on the alleged process (*traditio*) by which traditional material was passed from one generation to another. The claim is made that this process was variable, at times being rigid and faithful transmission and at other times including intentional or unintentional alterations, additions, or deletions due to a number of different factors.

Albrecht Alt (1883-1956)

Alt is mentioned here simply because he was so influential for the German Tradition-History School. He was the teacher of both von Rad and Noth (see below), and both of them credit him for providing the foundation for much of their work. One of his best known works was an essay entitled, "The God of the Fathers." In this essay he pointed to what he felt was evidence in Genesis of pre-Yahwistic tribal gods worshipped individually by the various tribes of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; namely, the God of Abraham, Gn 31:42; the Fear of Isaac, Gn 31:42; and the Mighty One of Jacob, Gn 49:24. He claimed that these along with El Bethel of Bethel, El 'Olam of Beersheba, El Ro'i at some southern sanctuary, and the unlocalized gods, El Elyon and El Shaddai, later became identified with Yahweh.

Gerhard von Rad (1901-1971)

Von Rad was a theologian (Lutheran??) interested mainly in the development of religious thought in Israel. As a result he wrote "The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions." He accepted the theories of Wellhausen and Gunkel in source and form criticism.

In 1938 von Rad wrote an article entitled "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," which really introduced the tradition-historical method. Douglas Knight, *Rediscovering the Traditions of Israel*, describes von Rad's concerns:

Von Rad's primary contribution is in directing attention to the living process which brought individual, independent traditions together to form the Hexateuch as we know it. Prior to von Rad, Gunkel penetrated back to the earliest, often pre-Israelite forms of the separate traditions ... But Gunkel was less concerned with drawing a detailed picture of how all these disparate materials became joined together ... This is the innovation which we find in von Rad's work.

Von Rad worked with the following assumptions: 1. The Pentateuch is really a Hexateuch. 2. Cult worship and ceremonies at various shrines are the central force in the formation of traditions. 3. As a nation Israel did not exist before the settlement in Canaan, but grew out of an alliance of tribes. Each tribe had various previous experiences and traditions. Gradually these were molded into one set of traditions for Israel as a nation. 4. Traditions may have historical kernels in them, but mainly traditions are religious interpretations of historical events.

In his essay on the Hexateuch von Rad proposed the following steps to explain the work as we have it.

1. The outline for the later Hexateuch is found in three short historical creeds, Dt 26:5b-9, Dt 6:20-24, and Jos 24:2b-13. In these creeds early Israel recalled what von Rad called the “Settlement Tradition” and confessed its faith in God’s redemptive activity. The cultic setting was the Festival of Weeks, originally supposed to have been a non-Israelite festival. The creed was recited as the worshipper brought his firstfruits and acknowledged the land as Yahweh’s gift to him. This festival was held at a place like Gilgal, where ownership of the land was still a living, contested issue.
2. The Sinai Tradition developed independently. The cultic occasion for recalling the tradition was the annual covenant renewal ceremony at Shechem, later associated with the Festival of Booths. How this covenant renewal ceremony began and why it was connected with laws given at Sinai von Rad does not say.
3. Patriarchal History was a later addition. Originally it spoke only of Jacob (he understood the reference to “a wandering Aramean” in the short historical creed of Dt 26:5b to refer to Jacob). Later the figures of Abraham and Isaac were geneologically connected with Jacob when tribes with those traditions figured into the picture.
4. The J writer (notice that von Rad did not deal only with oral tradition) became the most important contributor to and formulator of the Hexateuch. In von Rad’s opinion the J writer ...
 - ... interpolated the Sinai tradition, thereby adding law to gospel.
 - ... delayed the fulfillment of the promises of the land possessed by all the patriarchs individually until the settlement of Canaan under Joshua, thereby ingeniously uniting disparate traditions under one theme of redemptive history.
 - ... combined the primeval materials under a simple theme showing “the growing power of sin in the world” and postulating “a hidden growth of grace alongside the ever widening gulf between God and man.” God tries to deal with sin in warning, judgment, and separation, but all fails. Then he turns to Israel as his redemptive instrument. This great theological scheme is the great contribution of the J writer. He composed Gn 12:1-3 and thereby “provided the aetiology of all Israelite aetiology.” (Note how accurately von Rad describes the salvation history of Genesis. Unfortunately, however, he credits it all to the J writer rather than to the revelation of God.)

When von Rad’s method is analyzed, it closely resembles the crystallization source theory of Ewald from the 19th century. The only difference is that he credits much of the development of the sources to processes taking place during the alleged oral stage of Israelite literary development.

Martin Noth (1902-1968)

Noth was an historian who cared little for the religion of Israel. In fact he chose to ignore it if possible. His purpose was “to write a history of the literature of Israel from the earliest creative stages down to the literary fixation and their combination into final canonical structure.” He later published *The History of Israel*. In 1948 he wrote “A History of Pentateuchal Traditions” (*Ueberlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuchs*). In this work he expanded the method initiated by von Rad into a full-blown system of tradition-historical research. He preferred to speak of a Tetrateuch rather than a Pentateuch or Hexateuch, but otherwise entertained assumptions similar to those of von Rad.

Noth claimed to detect five individual themes in the Tetrateuch which at one time were separate from one another:

1. Guidance out of Egypt, which was the primary confession of Israel, although not all Israel experienced it.
2. Guidance into the Arable Land, which was not experienced by any tribe “*in toto*”, but is the combination of their different experiences which then became their joint heritage.
3. Promise to the Patriarchs, as explained by von Rad.
4. Guidance in the Wilderness, arising in the arable land to the south where there was contact with the tribes wandering in the Negev, whom the settled Israelites saw in strange and fanciful ways.
5. Revelation at Sinai, which is a late and secondary addition, although it is of ancient and all-Israelite origin.

Noth also theorized on the written history of the Tetrateuch. He asserted that P forms the main framework of the Pentateuch. J and E are incomplete sources which cannot stand by themselves and only enrich the account. Noth also felt that J and E were so similar that they needed some common source behind them. So he invented source G (Grundlage) which was supposed to be the common source from which both J and E drew for material. He also regarded it as the intermediate step between oral and written sources.

It might be mentioned here that Noth’s views were severely criticized by men like John Bright, a historian of the Albright school, for his highly speculative views which often ignored facts turned up by archaeology. Other more recent scholars have built on the theories of Noth and von Rad, often modifying or changing their views.

Otto Eissfeldt (1887-1973)

Eissfeldt’s *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (1934, 1965) gives a detailed literary-critical assessment of the history of the formation of the Old Testament on the basis of the documentary hypothesis. Eissfeldt is also known for his work on comparative Near-Eastern religious history. Eissfeldt follows the influence of Søren Kierkegaard when he asserts that there is an uncrossable chasm between history and faith. *Religionsgeschichte* or the History of religions is the prerogative of the history, and Biblical Theology is the prerogative of faith. Eissfeldt maintained that the faith displayed by the Old and New Testament as well as by Christian and Jewish believers, is limited only to that which is timeless and eternal and which can neither be judged by history and reason, nor judge them.

REDACTION CRITICISM

Another movement in the history of criticism, often closely associated with tradition-historical criticism, is called REDACTION CRITICISM. Redaction criticism is the study of the alleged redactors (editors) who in various stages supposedly took the written material at hand and formed it into a cohesive unit. This final step, of course, on the part of a redactor was necessary in order to bring about the composite text as we have it today.

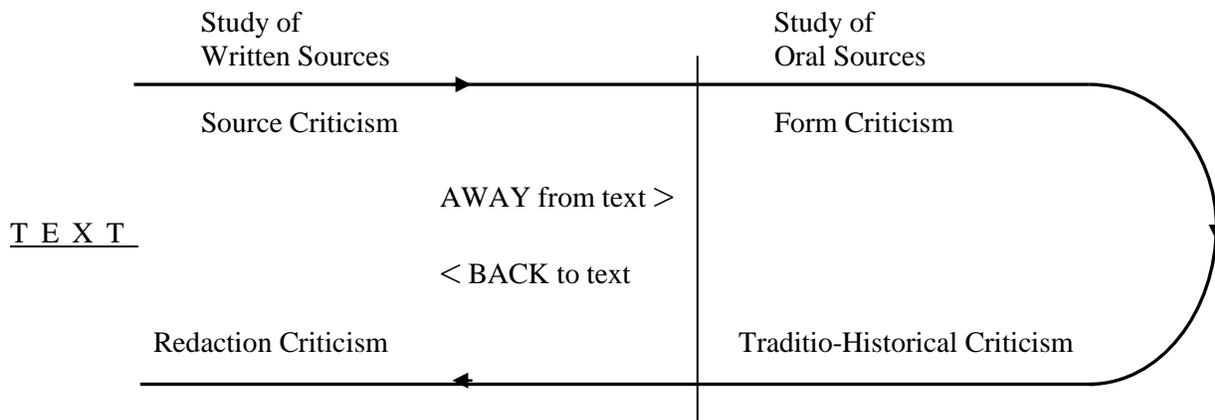
Horace Hummel comments that this term “is much less used in Old than in New Testament studies, because it implies a ‘redactor’ or ‘editor’ of *written* materials, and in Old Testament scholarship the

primary interest of critics remains on the *oral* period of transmission” (*The Word Becoming Flesh*, p 26).

In practically all phases of negative criticism we have noticed how more and more emphasis was being placed on redactors, who were presumably responsible for putting together the sources (either written or oral) into a structure which has come to be known as the Holy Scriptures. Frequently all sorts of “solutions” to unanswered questions became the work-assignment of this redactor, who in practically all instances remained anonymous.

It is interesting to note how again and again the efforts of negative critics led to an extreme atomism of a writing that was obviously far less fragmented and more unified as the text itself indicated, leading to dissatisfaction in many quarters and a search for better alternatives. Finally the redactor offered the alternative for the formulation of a more cohesive unit of the text.

Thus we might say that negative criticism in its “redaction criticism” stage has in its own peculiar way come back to the place from which it started, and which we can illustrate as follows:



- SOURCE CRITICISM – Study that attempts to detect and date alleged documentary sources behind received text.
- FORM CRITICISM – Study that attempts to discover the setting (*Sitz im Leben*) that would have given rise to the alleged oral traditions before the written text and to identify the genre of the various traditions.
- TRADITIO-HISTORICAL CRITICISM – Study that attempts to delineate the process by which, and the settings in which, the alleged oral tradition was handed down and developed up to the time of its being recorded in writing.
- REDACTION CRITICISM – Study of the alleged redactor(s) who in various stages supposedly took the written material at hand and formed it into a cohesive unit (the sum of which is greater than its parts) to bring about the text we have today.

CANONICAL CRITICISM

Canonical Criticism closes the loop in the diagram above. The critic no longer tries to dissect the text, but studies the intent of the text in its canonical form. He or she is less interested in the stages of development

that led up to the writing of the text or even the various literary aspects of a text. This school seeks to take more seriously the fact that the Bible is a collection of canonical writings regarded as sacred and normative in two communities of faith, Israel and the church. The meaning of the text for those communities is the most important issue.

Practitioners of Canonical Criticism do not deny that there were earlier oral and documentary phases in the development of the text, but they believe it is impossible for us to determine what they were, and even if we could, it would not be very useful to the community.

This emphasis on the canonical form of the biblical text implies several things. First, the biblical writings possess another dimension, one that may not have been there when the text was originally composed, but one it has acquired nevertheless. Even if a writing was composed without the initial intention or expectation that it would eventually become normative for Israel or the church, the fact that it acquired this status means that the text must be read from this added perspective with an eye on the new meaning it has acquired. In interpreting the text, readers must not only ask historical and literary questions about the text, but also how and why the text has addressed communities of faith. Their canonical status means that the texts have acquired a universal audience—communities of faith in every age and place who read them not simply to ask what their original authors intended but what they are saying to the living community of faith in the present.

Second, as part of a collection of biblical writings, a book acquires a canonical context. It is no longer read in isolation but along with the other biblical witnesses in all their variety. As such, it is no longer a single voice to be heard alone but stands as part of a chorus of voices to be heard along with the rest. Interpreters can no longer inquire solely into the message of a single text but must investigate this message as part of the entire canonical message, the sum total of all the canonical witnesses heard together.

An example would be that a psalm that was once a hyperbolic praise of an Israelite king has become Messianic for the redactor of Psalms and for his community (e.g., Ps 72).

The canonical critic is interested in two questions: What did the text mean to the community that “canonized” it? What does it mean to our community and other communities of faith today?

A name associated with canonical criticism is Brevard Childs (1923-2007). Childs had a significant positive influence in biblical theology by insisting that interpreters should be people of faith who view the text as [Scripture](#) and regard the final form of the [canon](#) as the norm for [interpretation](#). However, he held to many [liberal](#) views about Scripture, denying that Moses wrote the Pentateuch and seeing elements of pagan mythology in the Bible.

FRAGMENTATION OF CRITICISM

The current tendency of negative higher criticism is toward *atomization of methodology*, in which each school of criticism has broken up into many different factions, and toward *eclecticism*, in which each critic picks and chooses practices and theories from all of the various forms of criticism and recombines them into his (or her) own individual system. This is reflected by the degree to which the major biblical studies society in America, the Society of Biblical Literature, is divided into many small study groups which pursue their own specializations.

There is widespread agreement that *consensus has broken down* and higher criticism is in a state of disarray. The discovery and study of cuneiform literature from the 2nd millennium BC has undermined many of the traditional pillars of literary criticism and form criticism, since this evidence demonstrates

that already that early in history “canonical” texts were being transmitted faithfully through many centuries without significant change. Counter-attacks by conservative scholars and the in-fighting of critical scholars have demonstrated the inadequacy or falseness of many premises and “assured results” of criticism. Critics themselves have come to realize that there is no practical or spiritual value in dissecting dead texts.

Although critical theories and the pillars which support them have collapsed, critics have nothing to replace the fallen idols. About the only thing on which the critics agree is that there *can be no return* to a pre-critical view of Scripture or to biblical inerrancy even though critical theories have fallen apart. (See Knight and Tucker, p. 124-126). Critics agree on the “historicality” of the biblical text (that is, the Bible is a historically conditioned text, which partakes fully of the errors of its writers and their time), but there is no agreement on the methods for analyzing the text or on the results of such analysis. Increasingly biblical critics are detached from archaeological and historical studies and do their own thing in their own little corner.

In spite of the breakdown of any consensus, a number of trends can be seen:

I. Continued Development of the Traditional Forms

A. Source Criticism

As recently as 1970 the classic JEDP hypothesis dominated the scene. Today literary criticism is a chaos of conflicting views concerning the division and dating of the literary sources.

Traditional literary criticism is still widely practiced and has its die-hard advocates. A poster-child for this view is Richard Friedman, who in his book, *The Bible With Sources Revealed*, confidently divides the text into J, E, RJE (redactor of J and E), P, D, and R (the redactor who may be Ezra). He further identifies the first line of each source in Genesis and puts all the fragments in their proper order. In his translation of the Pentateuch each source is in a different color so that readers can easily read each source consecutively. The word *chutzpah* springs to mind as a one sentence evaluation.

Today source criticism is usually is practiced in combination with some other method. Most critics confess that the traditional criteria for determining the sources are all relative and have no validity unless they are combined with other criteria, such as form and content. There is no agreement either on the boundaries or the dates of the sources. For this reason literary critics today are usually interested in a wider ranger of goals than merely cutting the text up into its sources. There is a general tendency to emphasize the study of larger units of text, focusing on their structure, rhetorical effects, and their message. Discourse analysis and narrative analysis are examples of such methodology. Emphasis is on seeing the literary value of the texts.

In contrast to moderate critics of the mid-20th century like Albright, Bright, and deVaux who held a relatively high view of the historicity of the material in the Pentateuch, some recent critics like John Van Seters and T.L. Thompson regard the Pentateuch as having absolutely no historical value. This school is called “minimalism,” but it borders on biblical nihilism.

B. Form Criticism

Form criticism too now places more emphasis on larger units of text. There is an increasing emphasis on using the insights of sociology to analyze the Israelite society in which genres arose. There is no agreement about the relationship of oral and literary forms.

C. Redaction Criticism

The importance of redaction at all stages of the history of a literary text is a current emphasis. Many elements which were once explained as independent sources are now explained as due to revision and editing.

II. The Bible as Literature (Formalism, New Criticism)

Since the promotion of canonical criticism by Brevard Childs, many Bible interpreters have shifted their focus to understanding the literary qualities of the canonical books as we have them, rather than to trying to dissect the text into pieces. Robert Alter was another key figure in the popularization of this form of study. This has allowed Evangelicals to move more into the main stream of biblical studies since it does not require a particular view of the origin of the text.

III. “Scientific” Methods

A. Linguistics

Structuralism and semiotics are two closely related methods based on the science of linguistics. They are based on analyzing the conventions that govern the relationship between the “signs” (the words, the text) and the “signified” (the concept expressed). The practice often becomes so esoteric that it obscures the text rather than illuminating it. It too often treats beautiful literary texts like mathematical formulas to be solved.

B. Social Sciences

There is an increasing use of data from the social sciences in biblical study. Analysis of the forms and motifs of folklore and oral traditions of other societies are used to analyze the allegedly parallel forms in Israel.

Anthropological and sociological data from other cultures is used to reconstruct or analyze the society of Israel. For example, the role of genealogies in Israel is analyzed on the basis of study of the role of genealogies in recent or contemporary primitive cultures. In the anthropological approach the alleged evolution of Israel’s religion is reconstructed on the basis of a study of religions of primitive societies. Mendenhall’s theory of the conquest as a peasant revolt is an example of a sociological approach. Marxist scholars analyze Scripture on the basis of the theories about class struggle.

C. Psychology

A psycho-analytical approach which is more interested in an analysis of what the text reveals about the attitudes of the writer’s society than with the message which the writer intended to convey has been applied to a number of biblical texts. Feminist theologians analyze and reinterpret biblical texts as a means of advancing feminist ideology. Interpreters can draw their own meaning out of the text (intertextuality). To the degree that this approach produces ideological readings it is already a subset of the next category.

IV. Reader-Response Approaches

Deconstructionism – New Criticism placed the focus on subjective interpretation of the text

rather than authorial intent. Structuralism still clings to the conviction that the text can be objectively analyzed. Deconstructionism debunks the objective and scientific pretensions of these methods and promotes the anti-scientific, post-modern stance that there is no objective knowledge.

Conclusion

A well-known critic recently observed, “In scholarship by definition there is no heresy. We should rather practice and accept methodological pluralism. ... Old Testament scholarship at present is ‘in crisis.’ The Wellhausen paradigm no longer functions as a commonly accepted presupposition for Old Testament exegesis. And, at present, no other concept is visible that could replace it. ... At the moment there is no new model that could be expected to achieve common acceptance as a paradigm, and there will probably be none in the near future.”

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CLOSING OBSERVATIONS

One may wonder: “Why spend so much time on negative critics who approach the Bible from entirely different presuppositions, and who reveal their own weaknesses by continually contradicting their own views and inventing new theories?”

Before we consider ourselves to be immune from the dangers of these theorists, a brief look at church history will tell us how quickly their ideas can grow within church bodies, in fact within the entire body of nominal Christendom. We need look no further than the recent history of Evangelicalism and Lutheranism.

William Henry Green at the turn of the 20th century sounded this note of warning (*The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*, p 163):

Professedly evangelical men have ventured upon the hazardous experiment of attempting a compromise in this matter. They propose to accept these hypotheses in spite of their antibiblical character ...; and they expect to retain their Christian faith with only such modifications as these newly adopted hypotheses may require ... Would it not be wiser for them to ... inquire whether Christ’s view of the Old Testament may not, after all, be the true view?

Green warned of a danger which only a few decades later infected most of Lutheranism, also within our own country, having come over to this continent from Europe. Even in the Missouri Synod, in spite of some recovery from the Seminex methods, there is an increasing tendency to try to find room to accommodate critical methods.

Professor David Scaer, of the LCMS’s Fort Wayne seminary comments in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (CTQ 71, 2007, p 203-263) on the advance of critical methods of Scripture study in the Missouri Synod.

Contemporary biblical methods found a place in the LCMS without compromising the older faith. Challenged was the axiom that the older faith depended on the historical-grammatical method, which affirmed the Bible’s historical character, but the method itself was incapable of going behind the sacred texts through the oral tradition to the events themselves (p 204).

Current LCMS scholars have used the newer criticisms, always with the understanding that a

real history exists behind the biblical texts but not always addressing a necessary connection between the event and the text. So the historical content reported in the biblical text remains an unexamined assumption. (p 205).

Use of biblical criticisms by LCMS biblical scholars constitutes a real metamorphosis, but such use is normed by LCMS traditional core beliefs” (p 205).

After the trends of the 1970s, LCMS scholars followed the lead of Evangelical scholars by participating in critical biblical conversations. No longer was the historical-grammatical method enthroned as the Rosetta Stone for unlocking the Bible’s meaning. Passages could not simply be collected to provide support for an existing dogmatic system. Concordia Theological Seminary students no longer take one course in biblical hermeneutics, but they take courses that cover the four Gospels, the Pauline Epistles, the Pentateuch, the Major Prophets, and the Psalms. The biblical documents are confronted in their own peculiarities (p 206).

Claus Westermann, professor of Old Testament at Heidelberg University, Germany, whose books play a big role in the ELCA catalog, is another representative of those Old Testament scholars who try to represent “the best of both worlds.” In the introduction to his Handbook to the Old Testament he explains his position toward the Bible as follows:

When one starts with the Bible in whole or in part and tries to get at its singular characteristics, one comes to a conclusion which is already granted, namely, that in Scripture as a whole God’s Word has been entrusted to the congregation. ... In seeking to become acquainted with Scripture, we will therefore let the question concerning its message as a whole be our motivating concern in order that we thereby may become involved with the question as to the focal point of that entire message as it becomes apparent. ... The Bible in its totality is essentially a great history (p. 4,6).

Westermann then proceeds to explain the origin of Scripture according to the historical-critical method:

[The Bible] was not written as a continuous account but grew out of living traditions and was gradually put together. ... [The biblical narratives] were passed on orally for years, decades, and centuries before being put down in writing and then combined in the greater collections. ... The two older sources, the Yahwist (or J) and the Elohist (or E), so called from their use of the divine name, arose in about the ninth and eighth centuries respectively. One distinguishes between them and the later Priestly source (or P), which was not completed until the exile or shortly thereafter. ... The nucleus of this great work is a religious confession, which gathers about itself and within itself the ancient national traditions in all their abundance (p 6,16,17).

Westermann then proceeds to develop the theory as to how the Pentateuch developed from the nucleus of Ex 1-15, continued with the embellishment of the account of the patriarchs (Gn 12-50), and then finally received the primeval history (Gn 1-11) as a prologue. This was the work of the final redactor, who pieced together the Scriptures “as a whole” from various documents (much as described by J. P. Hyatt in the appendix to chapter 27). The “Priestly Code”, essentially the book of Leviticus, was once a separate legal corpus, which presupposed “life in an established community,” and was introduced into the Pentateuch “after the time of Ezra” (p 67 and 68).

The *Concordia Commentator* reviewed Westermann’s work as follows:

A simple, clear, workable, comprehensive study of the Old Testament for serious beginning Bible students. It gives evidence of first-rate scholarship throughout. The author speaks with

words of reverence and faith and shows a real commitment to the authority of Scripture.

CLOSING EVALUATION

Theories come and go. Recent scholars may contradict or at least modify the views of those who preceded them, thereby revealing the weaknesses of the previous theories. We may find one scholar's position closer to our liking than another. But all members of the historical-critical school of interpretation deny the miraculous verbal inspiration of the Bible. The LORD plays no real part in the formation of the Bible. Therefore, only naturalistic explanations will be forthcoming, the methods and final conclusions of which will be unacceptable to us, even though we may be able to receive some literary insights from the studies of these men. With the proliferation of schools, perhaps we need an umbrella definition of the historical-critical method. The historical-critical method is any method of Scripture study that uses any element of human reason or any field of human knowledge to pass critical judgment on the truthfulness, reliability, and accuracy of Scripture.

The historical-critical method, which rejects the inerrancy of Scripture and which sets itself up as the judge of the Bible, is deadly poison. It robs God's people of the clear teaching of Scripture. It sows uncertainty and doubt in the church. It presumptuously sets itself above the Word of God.

God has given us a better way. "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:1-5). Follow the better way.

APPENDIX: LITERARY APPROACHES TO THE OLD TESTAMENT—THREE TYPES

Earlier we noted that not all the types of literary study which critics undertake are inherently wrong. Not all literary studies have the same goals and presuppositions. The same methods can be used with presuppositions of faith or presuppositions of unbelief. Here we compare three types of literary study which are respectively: bad, dubious, and useful.

I. Bad: The Main-Stream Critical Approach to Literary Studies

This method often promotes subjective readings, alternate readings, and counter readings, rather than a text-centered reading which strives to determine the author's intent. The results range from the down-right ugly to the moderately useful. This approach is generally pluralistic and eclectic in methodology and attitude. Often the goals are not theological, but academic or polemic. The practitioners often are not theologians. This approach nearly always treats the historicity of the text as unimportant.

II. Dubious: The Evangelical Middle-of-the Road Approach

Here practitioners try to avoid the very negative results of extreme criticism and to maintain a basic historicity of biblical texts, but too often they compromise with critical methodology and findings. They aim to preserve theological integrity and academic respectability. They do not fully succeed in either.

III. Useful: Traditional Appreciation for the Literary Genres and Qualities of the Old Testament

We should devote considerable attention to the literary features of the Bible. If we neglect this, we may still convey the factual information in the text, but we will water down its emotional impact.

For example, one could get most of the basic message of Psalm 119 by reading eight to sixteen verses, but a reader misses the author's attempt to convey an exhaustive praise of the Word from A to Z if he does not read the entire psalm in a sitting. The story of Job could be told in a few chapters, but no one will appreciate the struggle of Job and his friends without enduring their struggle along with them. The acrostic style of Lamentations is designed to exhaust the expression of grief. It is easy to misunderstand the Song of Songs if one is unaware of its chiasmic structure. Centering of key thoughts is also a key element in the psalms, in Job, in Lamentations. Catch words are an important link in Proverbs. The text cannot be fully appreciated without recognizing these literary touches.

The Bible is usually concrete and visual and rich in images. One of the biggest follies of so-called simplified translations of the Bible is that they destroy the literary qualities.

The Bible is more than great literature, but it contains great literature. We read the Scriptures not simply to enjoy great literature but to be edified by the Word of God. Therefore, the most important aspect of the biblical texts is their meaning, not their literary beauty. Nevertheless, to fully appreciate the message from God, which is expressed in various literary forms, we have to appreciate the images and language in which it is expressed. An appreciation of the literary qualities of the texts increases the emotional impact which they have on the reader. We shouldn't dissect the texts to such a degree that they become lifeless lab specimens, but as we read them, we want to experience the literary features, which will enhance our enjoyment and appreciation of the message of the texts.

As you read, identify the main topic or theme of each text. Look for its main parts or divisions. Identify and interpret its figures of speech. Read the text aloud to appreciate its literary beauty. Meditate on its message.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. In what respect is traditio-historical criticism an outgrowth of form criticism?
2. What is the primary concern of the traditio-historical critics in their study of the oral form of biblical literature?
3. Distinguish between "*traditum*" and "*traditio*" according to their theory.
4. How did Albrecht Alt distinguish between the so-called "tribal gods" of Israel who were supposed to have preceded a monotheistic belief in Yahweh?
5. How did Israel as a nation come into existence according to Von Rad's assumptions?
6. How were Israel's "historical creeds" formulated according to Von Rad?
7. Which writer in Von Rad's view then united the various traditions under the theme of redemptive history?
8. What is the chief concern of redaction criticism?

9. Summarize how negative criticism has, so to speak, come “full-circle”.
10. Why might the commentaries of canonical critics be more useful than those of other critics?
11. Explain the dangers demonstrably associated with trying to compromise between Christian faith and modifications of the results of negative criticism.

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CHAPTER THIRTY

INTRODUCTION TO JOSHUA (Jos 1-5)

NAME

The book JOSHUA is named after its principal character. Joshua, the son of Nun, was of the tribe of Ephraim. His grandfather Elishama was head of the tribe (Nu 1:10). Born in Egypt, he was a young man at the time of the Exodus. At Rephidim he was appointed by Moses to lead Israel into battle against the Amalekites (Ex 17:8-16). He accompanied Moses to Mount Sinai (Ex 24:12-13). He was sent as one of the 12 spies from Paran (Nu 13:1-16), and with Caleb gave a favorable (minority) report (Nu 14:36-37). He was God's choice as Moses' successor: "A man in whom is the Spirit" (Nu 27:18). Moses installed him (Dt 34:9).

Joshua's name was originally Hoshea (Nu 13:8 – הוֹשֵׁעַ), meaning "he saves." Moses gave him the name Joshua (Nu 13:16; Dt 3:21 – יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), meaning, Jehovah is salvation.

PLACE IN SCRIPTURE

In the Hebrew Bible Joshua is placed right after the Torah (Pentateuch) as the first of the Former Prophets – *Nebhiim Rishonim* (נְבִיאִים רִאשׁוֹנִים). Although Moses was the greatest of Old Testament prophets, who knew the Lord "face to face," his writing is known as Torah (Law or Instruction) rather than prophecy.

The Former Prophets include: Joshua; Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The Latter Prophets – *Neviim Acharonim* (נְבִיאִים אַחֲרֹנִים) – include: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 Minor Prophets.

Although the Former Prophets contain much historical information, they report this history from a prophetic viewpoint. They present Israel not primarily as a political power, but as God's covenant people. Often major historical events are touched upon but briefly, whereas individual stories are told in minute detail. This is because the writers are preachers of law and gospel, not simply story tellers. They want to show events in the light of God's divine plan, that is, how he fulfills his covenant of grace. Natural forces and causes of events are secondary. Divine interposition is prominently emphasized. God is King. He carries out his plans and purposes according to his will.

PURPOSE OF JOSHUA

The purpose of the book of Joshua is to record for all time that the Lord's pledge to Abraham concerning the Land of Promise (Gn 12:1-3; 13:15) has attained complete fulfillment. Because of the Messianic import of that promise, the history of the conquest of Canaan at the same time serves as a standing confirmation of the promise of a future redemption.

Note: That this book is not part of an original "Hexateuch" as theorized by Alexander Geddes (ca. 1800) and subsequently embraced by many negative critics, is evident from its own balanced content and from its own clear references to a complete and well-known Torah (Jos 1:7-8; 8:31; 23:6, etc), written by Moses. Other evidence:

1. Jesus, Josephus, and the Masoretes refer to the "five books of Moses," and to the "five-fifths" of the law.

2. The Samaritans took over the Pentateuch, but not Joshua, even though Joshua contains elements of history favoring the nationalistic claims of Samaria.
3. Linguistically there are expressions peculiar to Joshua not found in the Pentateuch (“Yahweh, the God of Israel” – 14 times).
4. The Septuagint (250 BC) refers to the “Pentateuch.”
5. The critics themselves are by no means agreed on the Hexateuch matter. Many later critics oppose Geddes’ theory.

GENERAL CONTENT

The book of Joshua relates how Joshua led the Israelites from the plains of Moab across the Jordan, conquered the land west of Jordan in three great military campaigns, assigned a heritage to each of the tribes, exhorted the people in two great assemblies to remain steadfast toward the Lord, renewed their covenant with Jehovah, died, and was buried in the land of his heritage.

The following outline demonstrates that the book consists of two balanced halves (Harrison calls it a “bifid”):

THE LORD FULFILLS HIS PROMISE TO ISRAEL CONCERNING THE LAND OF CANAAN

- PART I: The Conquest (Chapters 1-12)
 - A. The preparations and entry (1-5:12)
 - B. The conquest (5:13 –ch. 12)
 1. The opening campaign (5:13 –ch. 7)
 2. The southern campaign (8 -10)
 3. The northern campaign and summary (11-12)
- PART II: The Distribution of Land and Farewell of Joshua (Chapters 13-24)
 - A. The allotments (13-22)
 1. at Gilgal (13-17)
 2. at Shiloh (18-22)
 - B. Farewell and conclusion (23-24)

AUTHORSHIP

The name of the book, as mentioned previously, refers to the book’s principal character, not its author. There is no statement as to authorship either in the book itself or elsewhere in Scripture.

Some events recorded in the book of Joshua appear to have taken place at a later time, after Joshua’s death, according to parallel accounts in the book of Judges (for example, Caleb taking possession of Hebron, Jos 15:13-19, compared with Jdg 1:10-15; the Danites’ occupation of Leshem, Jos 19:47, compared with Jdg 18:27-29).

The book was probably written in the period of the early Judges, but certainly not later than the time of the early kings. In Joshua 9:27 we are told that the Gibeonites were “hewers of wood” (in the service of the temple) “until this day,” the day when the book was written. According to 2 Samuel 21:1-9 Saul massacred the Gibeonites ... According to Joshua 15:63 the tribe of Judah could not dislodge the Jebusites in Jerusalem. In 2 Samuel 5:6-9 we are told that David accomplished this.

Note: the references “until this day” may refer not to the time of the book but to the time of the source the author may be using at this point. One such reference (6:25) says that Rahab was still alive at the time of writing.

Archer is of the opinion that Joshua was responsible for much of the book's material because of the "intimate biographical details" contained therein. He also cites archaic name-references to Canaanite cities (15:13; 15:49, etc.), names no longer used at a later period in history. The use of the pronoun "we" in Jos 5:1 is often cited as proof that the author was an eyewitness of events such as Jordan's crossing. Keil suggests that the book was written possibly 20 to 25 years after Joshua's death by one of his elders. This suggestion is as plausible as any.

TIME

We have already discussed this much-disputed matter in connection with the time of the Exodus (see the notes under Ex 12). If the date of the Exodus is reckoned at approximately 1440 BC, this would place the crossing of the Jordan River at about 1400, and Joshua's death at age 110 (Jos 24:29) some 30 to 40 years later. (See *Archaeology and the Old Testament* – Merrill Unger, p. 158-166.)

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JOSHUA 1

v. 1 "After the death of Moses ..." Joshua begins where Deuteronomy leaves off – a very fitting transition to "the Lord said to Joshua ..." Here the Lord speaks to Joshua directly! Later Joshua on occasion consulted the Urim and Thummim.

v. 2-9 The Lord's commission: "Get ready ... I will give you ... As I was with Moses, so I will be with you ... Be strong and courageous ... Be careful to obey the law my servant Moses gave you ..."

The Pentateuch was accepted as an authority (v. 7).

The boundaries of Canaan are delineated: South – desert; North – Lebanon; East – Euphrates; West – Great Sea. See the map in the powerpoint.

Joshua took the strongholds. The tribes were expected to finish the jobs after their allotments were assigned (ch. 13:1-7). Actually it wasn't until the days of David and Solomon that the kingdom extended to these limits.

Note that success is based on God's promise: "For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (v. 9).

An excellent text for an installation or commissioning service or for confirmation or graduation!

v. 10 "So Joshua ordered ..." No excuses!

v. 11 "Three days from now you will cross the Jordan ..." Commentators find a problem in the time element here. According to Ch. 2 the spies were gone 3 days (v. 22) and possibly came back on the fourth day. Then the Israelites, according to Ch. 3:1-2 moved camp from Shittim to the Jordan, waiting 3 more days before crossing the river.

Opinions

Knobel An obvious contradiction, indicating two authors.

Keil	We need not take this reference as an absolute command of Joshua. This was his intention. Other events delayed matters, causing a change in plans.
Edersheim	Agrees with Keil substantially.
Others	Prophetic history is not always written to give precise chronological order. The time element between one chapter and another does not always have to be reconciled. The Lord may have said this to Joshua on a later occasion, but it is reported here to show from the very beginning the Lord's encouragement to Joshua and his immediate positive response.

v. 12-18 Land east of Jordan had already been apportioned to Reuben, Gad, and one-half of Manasseh (Nu 32:17ff; Dt 3:18ff). Although their families and flocks remained behind, a portion of their “fighting men” (40,000) are to cooperate in conquering the land west of Jordan. These tribes readily cooperate, even offering encouragement to Joshua.

JOSHUA 2

v. 1 “Shittim” – already referred to in Nu 25:1; 33:49 – was Israel’s place of encampment on the east side of the Jordan valley. In secretly sending “two spies” to Jericho Joshua did not reveal a lack of confidence in God. This was good military strategy. God promises us the victory, but also asks us to employ the means for battle which he has placed into our hands.

They “entered the house of a prostitute.” There is no reason to play down this fact, as some do, by saying she was an “innkeeper.” The Hebrew word זֹנֵה (also the Greek references in He 11:31; Jas 2:25 – πόρνη) means “harlot,” “prostitute.” In the circumstances this was a logical place to go, where strangers would be less obtrusive than usual.

v. 4 “But I did not know where they had come from ...” Rahab lies in order to protect the spies. Was this a justifiable lie?

Some say that a lie is never excusable, and that Rahab acted out of weakness of faith. On the basis of Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 Rahab acted in faith. She had already committed herself to the God of Israel (v. 9). But her faith at this point was still weak. Instead of committing the situation into the hands of God, she lied, thinking that she was doing the right thing. The lie is not excusable. But her motive was not one of deliberate defiance. God forgave her, as he must so often forgive us.

“Situation ethics” poses all sorts of variables, which often do no more than confuse the issue.

Luther and others maintain it was not a lie in the strict sense. “It is an obliging lie by which one has regard for the good name or the body or soul of a neighbor. On the other hand, a harmful lie attacks all of these, just as an obliging lie defends them and is not properly called a lie” (LW 5, p 40, see also LW 2, p 292).

v. 11 Rahab’s information concerning the fear of the inhabitants of Jericho was helpful to the spies and used by them (cf. v. 24 “all the people are melting in fear”).

Note: This chapter has an added significance in that Rahab became an ancestress of the Savior.

The Israelites kept their promise to Rahab, sparing her and her family in Jericho’s destruction (ch. 6:22ff).

She was naturalized and married Salmon, one of the ancestors of David (Mt 1:5). According to Ruth 4:19f: Nahshon – Salmon – Boaz – Jesse – David is the genealogical succession. (The location of a gap in this genealogy is discussed in connection with Ruth 4.)

JOSHUA 3

v. 3 “When you see the ark of the covenant ...” This ark stands at the center of the narrative, indicating God’s presence. With the mercy seat the ark symbolizes the Lord’s salvation. With the Ten Commandments it is a reminder of his covenant at Sinai.

v. 4 “a thousand yards between you and the ark.” The ark is at a distance where all can see it and the miracle which is about to take place. The ark is central to the story!

Note: The first six verses of this text are suggested as a text for New Year.

v. 14-17 The miracle of the crossing of the Jordan happens at the time of the April grain harvest, when the river is at flood stage (v. 15). The pictures depicting this crossing showing a high wall of water close by, with a relatively narrow path for all the people to walk through, are erroneous. The water piled up at Adam “a great distance away” (v. 16). (Although the exact location of Adam and Zarethan are unknown, it is generally assumed that they were 20 miles or more above Jericho, where a natural gorge would offer an ideal location for what is described.) Thus the area for crossing could have been much wider than is usually depicted. Keil states: “This (the crossing) could easily have been accomplished in a half a day, if the people formed a procession of a mile or upwards in breadth.” Actually the crossing took place within a day’s time (cf. ch. 4:19).

It was fitting that a miracle similar to the one accompanying their exit from Egypt should mark their entry into the land of Canaan.

For Israel this miracle was a pledge of future victory. For Israel’s enemies it was a token of the judgment soon to overtake them.

JOSHUA 4

v. 1-2 Negative critics try to find fault with the Jordan-crossing account, claiming that here we have another example of repetition “proving” the multi-source theory, etc. This claim disregards several important facts:

1. We are concerned here with prophetic history. The writer in this chapter wishes to emphasize the point of the memorial stones, not chronological sequence.
2. We have here a familiar pattern of Hebrew writing. First the writer gives the broad outline of an event (ch. 3). Then he recounts and expands on details he wishes to emphasize (ch. 4). We have the same pattern in the creation story, the flood story, and many others in the Old Testament.

In ch. 3:12 the choosing of 12 men in connection with the Jordan crossing is mentioned.

In ch. 4:2-8 the details of what these men are to do is reported, i.e., to set up a memorial of stones at Gilgal, where Israel camps after crossing the Jordan (cf. also v. 20).

v. 6 “What do these stones mean?” Often used as a church dedication text. (cf. also Chapter 4:19-24).

v. 8-9 This refers to a second memorial of 12 stones, set up in the Jordan where the priests stood while Israel crossed the river. (The main translation of the NIV suggests that there was only one monument, not two.)

Here, too, critics attempt to find “contradictions,” “dual accounts” etc. If we simply accept the record as stated – that there were two memorials – there is no “difficulty” involved.

v. 14 That day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel.” God’s divine leadership gave Joshua authority as Moses’ successor.

v. 19 Gilgal is thought to have been 3 miles northeast of Jericho and about 5 miles west of Jordan. Israel arrives here “on the tenth day of the first month,” exactly 40 years after leaving Egypt, just in time to celebrate the Passover (see. Ex 13:4; 12:3; Jos 5:10).

JOSHUA 5

v. 1 The hesitation of the surrounding nations because of their terror allows time for circumcision and Passover. A distinction is here made between the “Amorite kings,” who led mountain tribes, and “Canaanite kings,” who occupied the lowlands closer to the sea.

v. 2-8 Circumcision was the token of God’s covenant with Abraham (Gn 17:9-14). During Israel’s wandering in the wilderness this rite had been suspended.

Note: The immensity of this task has moved critics to question the truthfulness of this report. As Keil and others point out, it isn’t as unrealistic as some like to think. Israel wandered about 38 years. Those under 20 years of age at the time of the Exodus, we can assume, had been circumcised and could help administer the rite here at Gilgal.

A noteworthy aspect of this circumcision is its completely unmilitary nature, incapacitating many men for a period of days in the face of surrounding enemies. God wants Israel to realize that he is their strength, and that his covenant is more important than all human considerations.

Why had God suspended circumcision? Were other ceremonial rites also suspended during these years? We know that other tokens of grace remained (pillar of fire; manna). We know that other ceremonial institutions remained (Sabbath, priesthood – see Numbers 15 and 16). But many of these questions concerning the 38 “years of silence” will remain unanswered.

v. 9 “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt” ... “Gilgal” from גלגל – “to roll away.” “A new significance is attached to an old name” (Wycliffe Commentary).

The “reproach of Egypt” has been variously interpreted:

1. Subjectively, as Keil, Daechsel: the reproach of the people of Egypt, who scoffed at the Israelites, suggesting that God would let them die in the wilderness (Ex 32:12; Nu 14:15f).
2. Objectively, the reproach of the Israelites suffered by them in the land of Egypt as a result of their many years of slavery.
3. Israel’s condition of disgrace, reflected in their uncircumcised condition, which they brought

on themselves by following the idolatrous ways of the Egyptians.

v. 10 “The Israelites celebrated the Passover.” Since its institution (Ex 12) Israel had apparently celebrated the Passover on but one occasion, a year later, but not since (Nu 9:5).

v. 11-12 The manna stops. Israel has reached its home!

Note: In v. 1 of this chapter the controversial “we” occurs, indicating the report of the crossing over Jordan by an eyewitness (“until we had crossed over”). Luther here follows the Septuagint and the Vulgate, translating “they.” The problem is in part textual.

The Hebrew letters are עברנו. These letters of the *kethiv* suggest the Qal, 1 pers. pl.: עִבְרָנוּ, which together with the preceding עַד־ would simply be translated: “until we crossed over.”

The Masoretes, however, put in the vowel points for the *qere*, the marginal reading עברם, an infinitive construct, “until their passing over.” Several manuscripts also have this reading עַד־עִבְרָם in the text itself as the *kethiv*.

Keil comments: “The reading of the Qere – till they passed over – is nothing but an arbitrary and needless conjecture.”

Archer calls attention to the same chapter, v. 6, where we read “to us” (Heb. לָנוּ), confirming, as he claims, the “we” in v. 1 (*Survey*, p. 264).

Hermeneutically, “the difficult reading is the one to be preferred.” Undoubtedly scribes were perplexed by the sudden suggestion of an eye-witness account and felt called upon to make some “adjustments.” If the right reading is “us,” this might still refer to the time of the source of this chapter rather than to the time of composition of Joshua as noted above.

v. 13-15 Note: It is unfortunate that Stephen Langton’s chapter division does not connect these verses with Chapter 6, where they obviously belong. The Lord here appears to Joshua and gives directions from 5:13 to 6:5 as to how Jericho is to be taken.

“A man standing ... with a drawn sword.” This “man” identifies himself as “commander of the army of the Lord” and later we read in 6:2: “Then the Lord said to Joshua ...” Here we have another theophany, the Lord in human form, as to Abraham (Gn 18:33) and to Jacob (Gn 32:24-30), encouraging Joshua that the Lord himself with an army consisting of the heavenly host was behind him.

“Take off your sandals” certainly reminds us of Moses’ experience upon Mount Horeb (Ex 3:5).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. Give a brief summary of the life of Joshua before he became Israel’s leader.
2. Among which books is Joshua placed in the Hebrew Bible? Why is this placement both appropriate and significant?

3. What is the “Hexateuch” theory? Why do we reject it?
4. Give the basic outline of the book of Joshua.
5. Which events recorded in the book may indicate that Joshua was not its author? What are some views regarding its authorship?
6. Which items recorded in Joshua ch. 1 show it to be a fitting continuation of the Pentateuch?
7. Does Joshua’s use of spies betray a lack of trust in the Lord? What similar situation did Moses encounter?
8. Give the Messianic import of Joshua chapter 2.
9. Evaluate Luther’s view of an officious or beneficial lie. Can a Christian serve as a spy or undercover cop? Do we have the obligation to report the location of the persecuted to the authorities?
10. What is central to the story of Israel’s miraculous crossing of the Jordan in chapter 3? How does the story itself emphasize this?
11. Why is chapter 4 more than “the same story by another source”? How many stone memorials are referred to in this account? Where was each located?
12. What various purposes did the Lord accomplish by means of the Jordan crossing?
13. Name three significant occurrences recorded in chapter 5:1-12.

FOR ADDED CONSIDERATION

Exercise: From these first five chapters of Joshua, find appropriate texts for the following occasions:

1. Church Dedication
2. Ordination – Installation – Commissioning
3. Thanksgiving Day
4. New Year’s Day

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE CONQUEST OF CANAAN (Jos 6-12)

JOSHUA 6

v. 1-6 This, as previously mentioned, is a continuation of the Lord's instructions to Joshua concerning the taking of Jericho, a heavily fortified, strategically located city, which had to be conquered before going into battle in Canaan proper. These instructions of the Lord could only be accepted in faith ... Note the significance of the 7 priests, 7 trumpets, 7 days, 7 circuits on the last day, symbolic of completeness, perfection, consummation ... Note also the significance of the ark of the covenant, mentioned 6 times in this story, symbolizing the Lord's presence in this battle.

The Battle Is the Lord's! The instructions, the means, the victory itself are all his.

v. 17 "The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord." The KJV translates "And the city shall be accursed." The NIV translation here, as well as in succeeding verses (18, 21, etc.) is more accurate, as the footnote states: "The Hebrew term refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the Lord, often by totally destroying them."

This is the execution of the **מְרִיבָה**, referred to previously (Lv 27:28, 29). Jericho was "God's plunder," not the people's.

v. 19 Certain portions of the plunder – silver, gold, bronze, iron – could be reconsecrated to the Lord and become a part of his treasury. The emphasis here is that nothing of the plunder was to be used privately. Whenever Israel forgot this (Achan, Saul) the Lord's punishment was quick and severe.

Relatively few cities (Jericho, Ai, Hazor) were to be completely destroyed. Others were to be occupied.

v. 23 The promise to Rahab is kept (cf. 2:12-21). She and her family, however, are placed "outside the camp" until proper ceremonial cleansings, etc., can be taken care of.

v. 26 "Cursed before the Lord is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho." This applies to refortifying the mound of the city. The oasis of Jericho, sometimes referred to as "City of Palms," was inhabited by Benjamites (Jos 18:21; Jdg 3:13; 2 Sm 10:5). When during Ahab's reign Hiel rebuilt Jericho as a fortified city, this warning of Joshua, poetically expressed, was fulfilled in the death of his two sons (1 Kgs 16:34).

Note: God's messages in this chapter are clear: The battle is mine; follow my commands, trust in my power ... All participate; all shout; all are involved ... Keep yourselves separate. This is a holy war ... Only by faith can the victory be accomplished.

The archaeological identification of the level of the Jericho destroyed by Joshua has been much debated. See the powerpoint and supplemental report for a discussion of this problem.

JOSHUA 7

With this chapter begins the first of Joshua's three campaigns into Canaan, unfortunately with a stunning defeat of Israel at Ai. As we study these campaigns leading to the conquest of Canaan in the subsequent chapters, we need to remember that the book of Joshua gives us just the highlights of Israel's campaigns.

We are dealing with a selective condensation, God's way of telling history.

v. 1 "But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things." Two things are emphasized by way of introduction: 1. God was serious about his punishment of those who violated his command to destroy all things devoted to himself; 2. the guilt of one person in this matter had to be borne by the entire nation ("the Israelites acted unfaithfully ...").

v. 2 Ai was located 10-12 miles northwest of Jericho, about 2 miles east of Bethel ("house of God") and close to Beth Aven ("house of idols"). Beth Aven may be a later name of the place, due to the calf idolatry there. Ai commanded the route into the center of Canaan.

v. 3-4 The report of the scouting expedition indicates that only a part of Israel's army would be required against Ai's "few men." According to Joshua 8:25 there were about 12,000 people in Ai. The tone of this passage reflects an overconfident attitude, also a failure to seek the Lord's counsel.

v. 5-9 "The hearts of the people melted." Typical pre-Jericho behavior. Joshua's prayer also reflects a spirit of defeatism.

v. 16-21 Note that Achan does not come forward until the procedure of finding the culprit by lot points to him.

v. 24 "his sons and daughters." The entire family was implicated. Living in the tent where the loot was concealed, they must have known what was going on. (In Dt 24:16 it is otherwise forbidden to extend the punishment of a criminal upon his children.)

Note: This chapter demonstrates the Lord's repeated admonition to his people Israel: follow my commands and you will be victorious.

The location of the sites of Ai and Bethel has been the subject of considerable debate. See the powerpoint and supplemental report for discussion of this problem.

JOSHUA 8

v. 1-2 The Lord again reassures Joshua. This time he advises Joshua to "take the whole army" and indicates the "ambush strategy" to be employed in the taking of Ai. Is this an indirect rebuke for not consulting the Lord prior to the previous Ai encounter?

v. 3-13 There is a textual or exegetical unclarity in the battle plan. Did Joshua's main army consist of 30,000 men, from which 5,000 served as an ambush party (v. 4 and v. 12)? This is the view of Young and Edersheim. Or did Joshua take the entire army (v. 3) and have 5,000 serve as an ambush party (v. 12)? Then how do we explain the 30,000 sent out at night to set an ambush (v. 3-4)? Keil adopts the view that Joshua took his entire army, with 5,000 men serving as an ambush, and that the "30,000" is a "copyist's error." In other words, the 30,000 reported in v. 3 should be the same as the 5,000 reported in v. 12. Daechsel agrees with Keil, suggesting that the only possible alternative would be the use of two ambushes, one of 30,000 and another of 5,000. It seems rather unrealistic, however, to think of 30,000 men in terms of an "ambush"! Another solution is to translate 30 thousand men as 30 chief men — these thirty were the special forces or elite commandos who were to take a position very near the city to seize control of the gate so the others could follow.

The simplest explanation is that Joshua mobilized the whole army and sent the force of 30,000 ahead in order to set up the initial positions for the attack. Joshua later arrived with the main force.

Once this difficulty is resolved, the battle plan is straightforward and easily followed according to the account given.

v. 30-35 Following the victory at Ai, Joshua carries out the divine ordinance mentioned in Dt 11:26-30 and Dt 27.

This service of covenant renewal and thanksgiving entailed a journey to Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, in the heart of enemy territory. The mountains referred to are located in the approximate center of Israel. Both mountains rise to a height of 3,000 ft., with a huge natural amphitheater between.

According to previous instructions the service begins with burnt offerings and fellowship offerings signifying worship, prayer, thanksgiving and fellowship upon ratification of a vow.

Blessings are spoken upon Gerizim (Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, Benjamin – the sons of wives). Curses are spoken upon Ebal (Reuben, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Zebulun – sons of handmaids except Reuben and Zebulun).

This service signified that the law of God was now the law of the land.

JOSHUA 9

v. 1-2 Joshua's victories prompted the Canaanite kings west of Jordan to form a defensive league against Israel. The defection of the Gibeonites thwarted this plan.

v. 3-13 Gibeon was located 5-6 miles southwest of Ai. The Gibeonites were Hivites (9:7), and in league with several neighboring towns in their deceptive plot (9:16-17).

Somewhere they must have learned that the God of Israel did not insist on exterminating those outside of Canaan (Dt 20:10-18). Hence their claim to come from far away, and their ruse in failing to mention Jericho, lending credence to their claim of having been on the journey a long time.

v. 14-15 Even partaking of food – as the Israelites do here – is a commitment. Not seeking counsel of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim is here also cited as an act of neglect (confer Nu 27:18-23). A treaty is concluded, ratified in Yahweh's name, therefore by its very nature unbreakable (Lv 19:12; Eze 17:12-19).

v. 16-23 When the ruse is uncovered Joshua curses the Gibeonites by making them woodcutters and water carriers for the tabernacle, not, however, exterminating them, because of the oath-bound treaty.

QUESTION: Was Joshua right in keeping an oath in which another party acted deceptively?

Joshua erred in not asking the Lord's counsel (v. 14). In a way he did place the Gibeonites into a sort of ban by committing them to temple service. Here the Lord's subsequent action is worth noting:

1. In Jos 10:2-7 we see the Gibeonites protected by a miracle of God.
2. In 2 Sm 21:1ff we see Israel punished by God when Saul massacred the Gibeonites.
3. The Gibeonites served at the temple many years as woodcutters and water carriers.
4. After Shiloh was destroyed the altar of Israel was at Gibeon until the Temple was built.
5. After the exile Gibeonites participated in the rebuilding of the temple (1 Chr 9:2; Eze 2:43; 8:20).

JOSHUA 10

v. 1-5 Adoni-Zedek, king of Jerusalem, heads a coalition of kings from the following city-states: Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon.

Note the similarity between Adoni-Zedek (Lord of Righteousness) and Melchizedek (King of Righteousness).

- v. 7-14 The Lord assures Joshua, following up this assurance with the following assistance:
1. Joshua's surprise attack (v. 9);
 2. A "confused" enemy (v. 10);
 3. A fearsome hailstorm (v. 11);
 4. A prolonged day (v. 12-14).

Note: The LONG DAY reported here has given rise to many interpretations:

1. An exaggerated story based on a folk-tale (DeWette);
2. A poetical account not intended to be understood literally (Keil);
3. A long night rather than a long day. Joshua, looking for relief from the intense heat of the sun, prayed, "Sun, be dumb at Gibeon" (Wycliffe); "Sun, desist, be silent ... (Roehrs);
4. A prolonged day, accomplished by a miracle of God.

Our own choice of the above options is self-evident.

Some, including Lutheran commentators, claim that Joshua's words indicate "a belief in the sun's rotation around the earth." We disagree. The Bible here espouses neither a Ptolemaic nor Copernican solar system. It simply accommodates itself to the way in which we speak every day when we refer to "sunrise" or "sunset."

v. 15 "Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal." In view of the verses which follow, this verse hardly seems to agree with the situation, and also seems to conflict with v. 43 in the same chapter, which repeats these words and states that Joshua returned to Gilgal after the entire southern campaign was finished.

Edersheim "solves" the apparent conflict by considering v. 12-15, which would include this statement, as a part of the quote from the "Book of Jashar" (mentioned in v. 13). This book, mentioned also in 2 Samuel 1:18, was apparently a book praising the great deeds of Yahweh in poetry.

The Septuagint "solves" this problem by omitting v. 15 entirely.

One wonders if in the case of Hebrew literature, which inserts flashbacks (v. 16 ff) without concern for chronological sequence, it is really necessary to "solve" a problem which doesn't even exist!

v. 16-27 The kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon are publicly executed. Putting feet on their necks as a token of victory was an custom of the time. Taking their bodies down from the trees is according to Dt 21:21-33.

v. 28-39 The Southern Campaign is completed in a series of lightning-like attacks against key Canaanite cities: Makkedah (v. 28); Libnah (v.29-30); Lachish (v.31-32); Horem (v. 33); Eglon (v. 34-37); Debir (v. 38-39). See the map of the campaign in the powerpoint.

v. 42 "The Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel."

Note: Joshua in this campaign set out to destroy the fighting ability of these city-states. He did not permanently occupy the cities at this time. The occupation and eventual extermination of the Canaanites was to be taken care of by the individual tribes after receiving their territorial allotments.

JOSHUA 11

This chapter covers the last of Joshua's three campaigns for the conquest of Palestine, the Northern Campaign. See the map in the powerpoint.

v. 1-4 "Jabin, the king of Hazor" ... Hazor was a key fortress city, situated north of the Sea of Galilee (called Kinnereth in v. 2), undoubtedly the largest and most important city of Canaan at that time.

Under Jabin a coalition of area kings and remnants of previously conquered armies was formed, equipped with horses and chariots. This was Israel's first encounter with horses in Canaan.

(The dynastic name "Jabin" appears in texts uncovered in the excavation of Hazor.)

v. 7 "suddenly" – again Joshua uses the element of surprise.

v. 16-23 These verses give a summary of the series of three campaigns which took 7 years. This figure is based on Caleb's age. According to Joshua 14:7 Caleb was 40 years old when he spied at Kadesh. Adding 38 years would make his age 78 at the crossing of Jordan. At the close of the wars Caleb gives his age [14:7] as 85. This gives the length of campaigns for Canaan at 7 years.

v. 21-23 The Anakites were "the giants" reported by the spies. They were driven to the later Philistine strongholds (Gaza, Gath, Ashdod). Goliath seems to be related to them.

"THEN THE LAND HAD REST FROM WAR" Joshua 11:23b.

JOSHUA 12

Thus far only the kings who formed a league against Israel were mentioned. This chapter gives a more comprehensive list of the kings defeated, including those east of the Arabah (Jordan-Dead Sea rift). The eastern portion is summarized as the territories of Sihon, the Amorite king, and Og, king of Bashan (v. 1-6).

The 31 kings west of Jordan follow (Central and Southern Canaan v. 9-16); (Northern Canaan v. 17-24). They are mentioned in the order of conquest. The location of some of the places mentioned is uncertain.

Note:

1. Not all Canaanites were wiped out at once, so that the land might not become desolate (Ex 23:29f). God also wanted the tribes to carry out their individual responsibilities as they occupied the territories apportioned to them.
2. In certain instances (Jericho, Ai, Hazor) entire cities with their inhabitants were destroyed, as a witness against the total degeneracy of Canaanite idolatry.

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The contents of Chapters 1 to 12 can be remembered as to content and significance as follows:

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>CONTENT</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANCE</u>
1.	Joshua's Commissioning	"Be strong and courageous."
2.	The Spies – Rahab	Christ's Ancestry
3.	Crossing the Jordan	The Ark – God's Presence
4.	Two Memorials	"What do these stones mean?"
5.	At Gilgal	Circumcision-Passover-Manna
6.	Jericho	The Battle is the Lord's!
7.	Ai and Achan	"Things devoted"
8.	Central Campaign	Ebal and Gerizim
9.	Gibeonites	Hewers and Watercarriers
10.	Southern Campaign	"O sun, stand still."
11.	Northern Campaign	"Then the land had rest from war."
12.	The List of Kings	Mission Accomplished!

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Jos 6-12)

1. Who appeared to Joshua before the destruction of Jericho? In what form? With what message?
2. Give theme and parts for a sermon on the fall of Jericho.
3. How were the Israelites to show that Jericho was "devoted" to the Lord? Who was spared? What things were kept?
4. In what way did the sin of one family bring shame on the entire nation? What New Testament parallel can we cite for this? What lesson lies in this for a Christian congregation today?
5. Outline the strategy whereby Ai was finally destroyed.
6. Review Israel's covenant-renewal service. Why was this strategically dangerous to carry out at this time?
7. By what clever ruse did the Gibeonites trick Joshua into making a treaty with them? What had Joshua failed to do at this occasion? What disposition was made in this case?
8. By what various means was Joshua able to win a mighty victory over the southern coalition of kings?
9. How do you interpret the passage relating to the sun standing still?
10. Which five cities were captured in Canaan's Southland? Why do we call this a "war of conquest" rather than a "war of occupation"?
11. Which important city to the north still needed to be conquered? Why was this opposing army a formidable one? In what brief way does Scripture record the victory over this northern coalition?
12. How many years did it take the Israelites to conquer the land of Canaan? In how many campaigns? Which words of chapter 11 indicate that the conquest was completed?
13. How is the conquest of Canaan summarized in chapter 12?

FOR ADDED CONSIDERATION

Summarize briefly both CONTENT and PROPHETIC MESSAGE of each of the first twelve chapters of the book of Joshua.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO CANAAN DISTRIBUTED (Jos 13-21)

JOSHUA 13

This chapter begins a new part of the book, the part relating to the DISTRIBUTION OF THE LAND OF CANAAN. A few general remarks are in order:

1. The distribution was made at two places: Gilgal (ch. 14-17) and Shiloh (ch. 18-21). At Gilgal territories were assigned to Caleb (ch. 14), Judah (ch. 15), and Ephraim-Manasseh (ch. 16-17).

At Shiloh the remaining tribes received their allocations, including the Levitical cities.

Why this distribution was made at two different places is not entirely clear. Keil and Daechsel suggest that some of the tribes were accustomed to a nomadic existence and therefore somewhat reluctant to settle down. They also were not happy over the prospect of driving out the heathen inhabitants. Hence the delay.

2. Pre-arrangements for distribution had already been outlined by Moses (Nu 26:52-56; Nu 34). It was to be done by Eleazar, Joshua, and a representative from each tribe. It was to be done by lot. The lot was to determine the situation of each inheritance, not its exact boundaries. Original arrangements needed some modification later on in the case of several tribes. Since much of the land was still inhabited by Canaanites, precise execution of occupying the apportioned land was not always carried out as directed.
3. Although plans were made for total occupancy of the land, these plans were in some cases never fully realized. Unfaithfulness to God's directions, tribal friction, etc. were responsible for this.

v. 1-6 "When Joshua was old ..." Joshua died at age 110 (ch. 23:1). At this time he was around 90. The Lord wanted the apportionment to take place before Joshua's time was ended, even though the portions mentioned in the next verses still needed to be occupied.

In verses 2-5 the lands remaining to be conquered are mentioned first. This was land chiefly along the Mediterranean coast and to the north. See the map in the powerpoint.

v. 8-13 Mention is again made of the lands east of Jordan, apportioned to Reuben, Gad, and one-half of Manasseh. Note in v. 13 that the Israelites east of Jordan failed to drive out the people living there, contrary to God's command. Other tribes failed to do the same, which eventually led to Israel's downfall.

v. 14 "To Levi ... no inheritance" ... See Ex 32:26-29; Nu 18:9-24; 35:1-8; Jos 13:33; 18:7.

v. 15-31 The rich grazing lands east of Jordan assigned to Reuben (v. 15-23), Gad (v. 24-28) and ½ Manasseh (v. 29-31). These lands, however, were continually exposed to invasions from Moabites, Ammonites, Amalekites, Midianites, Arameans and others, as later history shows.

Note v. 22, which refers to the death of Balaam.

The boundaries of tribal areas east of Jordan are not precisely delineated. Maps showing these apportionments therefore often differ. Gad's territory in the middle was generally known as Gilead, and

Manasseh's territory in the north as Bashan.

JOSHUA 14

v.1-5 According to Moses' prearrangements assignments were to be made by lot. Perhaps two urns were used, one containing clay tablets with names of the tribes, the other with the land allotments. First one tablet was drawn, then the other with the assignment.

v.6-15 The first apportionment west of Jordan took place at Gilgal. As Judah's turn comes up, Caleb comes forward with a special claim. Moses refers to this claim in his farewell address (Dt 1:36). Although 85 years old, Caleb says: "I am ... strong ... vigorous ...," and as head of Judah's tribe he asks for the mountainous region of the Anakites which the Lord promised him. This territory still needed to be conquered (Jos 15:14-17; compared with Jdg 1:9-15).

Note: There is something very refreshing about the implicit trust and courage expressed by Caleb, this veteran warrior, offering excellent material for a character study. This could be a good text for senior citizens!

JOSHUA 15

v.1-12 The boundaries of JUDAH are delineated:

S	–	Edom, Wilderness of Zin, southern end of Dead Sea, Kadesh Barnea
E	–	Salt Sea to the end of the Jordan River
N	–	From the Jordan, Valley of Ben-Hinnom, Kiriath Jearim
W	–	Great Sea

v.13-20 This supplement shows that:

- a. The enemy is not easily destroyed;
- b. Incentives are needed to fight;
- c. Water supply is important.

v.21-62 Judah's cities are listed according to those in the Negev, the Shephelah (foothills), the Central Ridge, and the Judean desert.

v. 63 The Jebusites were driven out (Jdg 1:8) but regained Jerusalem, and were finally conquered at David's time (2 Sm 5). This verse gives evidence of pre-Davidic authorship. Note: "To this day the Jebusites live there with the people of Judah."

JOSHUA 16

v. 1 "The allotment for Joseph." As a reward to Joseph for his service during the years of famine, his sons Ephraim and Manasseh became the heads of two tribes. Ephraim, the younger, received the preferential blessing (Gn 48:11-20).

v.5-9 EPHRAIM'S territory is outlined. He receives fertile land along the Jordan valley and land in central Canaan.

v. 10 "They did not dislodge the Canaanites ..." This ominous sentence, repeated in the case of other tribes, portends future trouble. Instead of driving out the Canaanites, they made them do "forced labor." This proved to be disastrous, since the Canaanites seduced Israel to commit idolatry.

JOSHUA 17

v. 1 “This was the allotment for the tribe of MANASSEH.”

v.2-6 First Manasseh’s portion east of Jordan is affirmed. Makir, Manasseh’s firstborn, is the prominent leader of the tribe east of Jordan. One of his descendants, Zelophehad, had no sons, leading to special stipulations for inheritance received by daughters (outlined in Nu 27:1-11; 36:1-12).

Note how directly the Pentateuch and Joshua are connected!

v.7-11 Manasseh’s portion west of Jordan was around Shechem, the center of the land.

v.12-13 Again we note the failure to dislodge the Canaanites.

v.14-18 The Ephraimites complain: Why only one portion? In the light of their generous allotment their complaint is ridiculous. Joshua replies accordingly: “If you are so great, make room for yourselves!” Then their real reason, fear of the Canaanites, comes to light (v. 16). But Joshua wisely refuses to grant them more.

It is typical of the Ephraimites to express dissatisfaction, a trait which comes to light at various times in subsequent history. Eventually the Ephraimites under Jeroboam I led the way toward the division of the kingdom.

Note: In both of these chapters we begin to see a weakening process set in. Israel is unwilling to drive out the Canaanites. Instead, they make complaints, asking for portions of land where they will not have to exert themselves.

JOSHUA 18

v. 1 “The whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at SHILOH.” Shiloh was about 10 miles south of Shechem, in Ephraim. The tabernacle was set up here. (Here it remained until Eli’s death, when the ark was captured by the Philistines.)

v.3-10 So Joshua said: How long will you wait? (For a possible cause of the delay and shift in place of allotment from Gilgal to Shiloh see our introductory comments on the apportionment under Joshua 13). The system of allotment is apparently reorganized. Three representatives from each of the seven remaining tribes are to survey and evaluate the remaining land, and then the further apportionment is to take place at Shiloh.

v. 11-27 BENJAMIN’S portion:

N	–	Luz (Bethel)
W	–	Kiriath-Jearim
S	–	Valley of Ben Hinnom
E	–	Jordan River

Benjamin’s portion, between the strong tribes of Ephraim and Judah, was “a place to dwell in safety” (Dt 33:12). Closely associated with Judah, Benjamin remained with Judah after Jeroboam’s rebellion. The land belonging to Benjamin was mountainous and somewhat unproductive, a rather small area. In this region, however, were some important cities: Bethel, Gibeon, Ramah, Mizpeh, and Jerusalem (on the

border with Judah).

Benjamin later became a contested area between Judah and Ephraim at the time of the divided kingdom.

JOSHUA 19

This chapter reports the allotments to the remaining tribes (except Levi) and to Joshua.

- | | | | |
|---------|---------------------------|---|--|
| v.1-9 | SIMEON
(Gn 49:5-7) | – | Cities in the Negev and Shephelah of Judah.
Note: “taken from the share of Judah.” |
| v.10-16 | ZEBULUN
(Gn 49:13) | – | The plain of Megiddo (Esdraelon), with access to the coast via Jezreel. The Bethlehem mentioned is not the one south of Jerusalem. |
| v.17-23 | ISSACHAR
(Gn 49:14-15) | – | The valley of Jezreel (a noted battlefield) and nearby heights; productive, near the Jordan and Sea of Galilee. |
| v.24-31 | ASHER
(Gn 49:20) | – | South of Sidon, along the Mediterranean coast; Mount Carmel; fertile, olive producing. |
| v.32-39 | NAPHTALI
(Gn 49:21) | – | East of Asher along the Sea of Galilee, upper Jordan; fertile |
| v.40-49 | DAN | – | West of Benjamin, toward the Mediterranean. Note v. 47, which (Gn 49:16) refers to the move of the Danites as recorded in Judges 18. Is this reference a later gloss or was Joshua written after the first events in Judges? |
| v.49-50 | JOSHUA | – | Although unrecorded, God had promised Joshua a special inheritance similar to that of Caleb. Joshua asks for Timnath Serah, a city in the hill country of Ephraim. |

Note: It is interesting to compare the allotments with Jacob’s prophetic blessings in Genesis 49 (see references above). In some cases it is possible to see a connection, as in the case of Simeon (scattered in Judah); Zebulun (access to the sea); Asher (fertile land). In other cases the prophecy of Jacob is fulfilled in subsequent historical events. Sometimes one has to guess at the possible import of Jacob’s words.

v. 51b “AND SO THEY FINISHED DIVIDING THE LAND.”

JOSHUA 20

This chapter shows how the provisions concerning the SIX CITIES OF REFUGE are carried out (Nu 35:9-34; Dt 19:1-13). The purpose of these cities as outlined in the Pentateuch, protecting those guilty of manslaughter from vendetta, is briefly reviewed.

Cities West of Jordan: Kedesh, Shechem, Hebron (v. 7)
East of Jordan: Golan, Ramoth-Gilead, Bezer (v. 8)

See the map in the powerpoint.

JOSHUA 21

The Levites are assigned to their inheritance, consisting of cities scattered throughout the territories east and west of Jordan. 48 cities were promised, including the 6 Cities of Refuge (Numbers 35:1-8). As temple servants the Lord wanted the Levites to serve as a wholesome leaven throughout the nation. A circle of pasture land around each city was designated for their use. Their real “inheritance” was the Lord himself.

- v. 4-8 Kohathites – 13 “priestly” cities; 10 others; 23 cities in all
- Gershonites – 13 cities
- Merarites – 12 cities

Note: The priesthood was committed to the line of Aaron (Nu 18:1-7). Other Kohathites served in the sanctuary. The Gershonites took care of hangings, curtains, etc. The Merarites were responsible for bars, pillars, etc. These duties were outlined in Numbers 3, and pertained chiefly to tabernacle service. David later on reorganized the duties of the Levites to correspond with temple service.

v. 9-41 These verses show how the cities were distributed to the various Levitical branches. The Kohathites, of course, had their 13 priestly cities in Judah and the 10 others in Ephraim and Manasseh. This distribution presupposed the subjugation of these cities. Israel’s apostasy prevented a quick completion of this.

- v. 45 “NOT ONE OF ALL THE LORD’S GOOD PROMISES TO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL FAILED.”

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Jos 13-21)

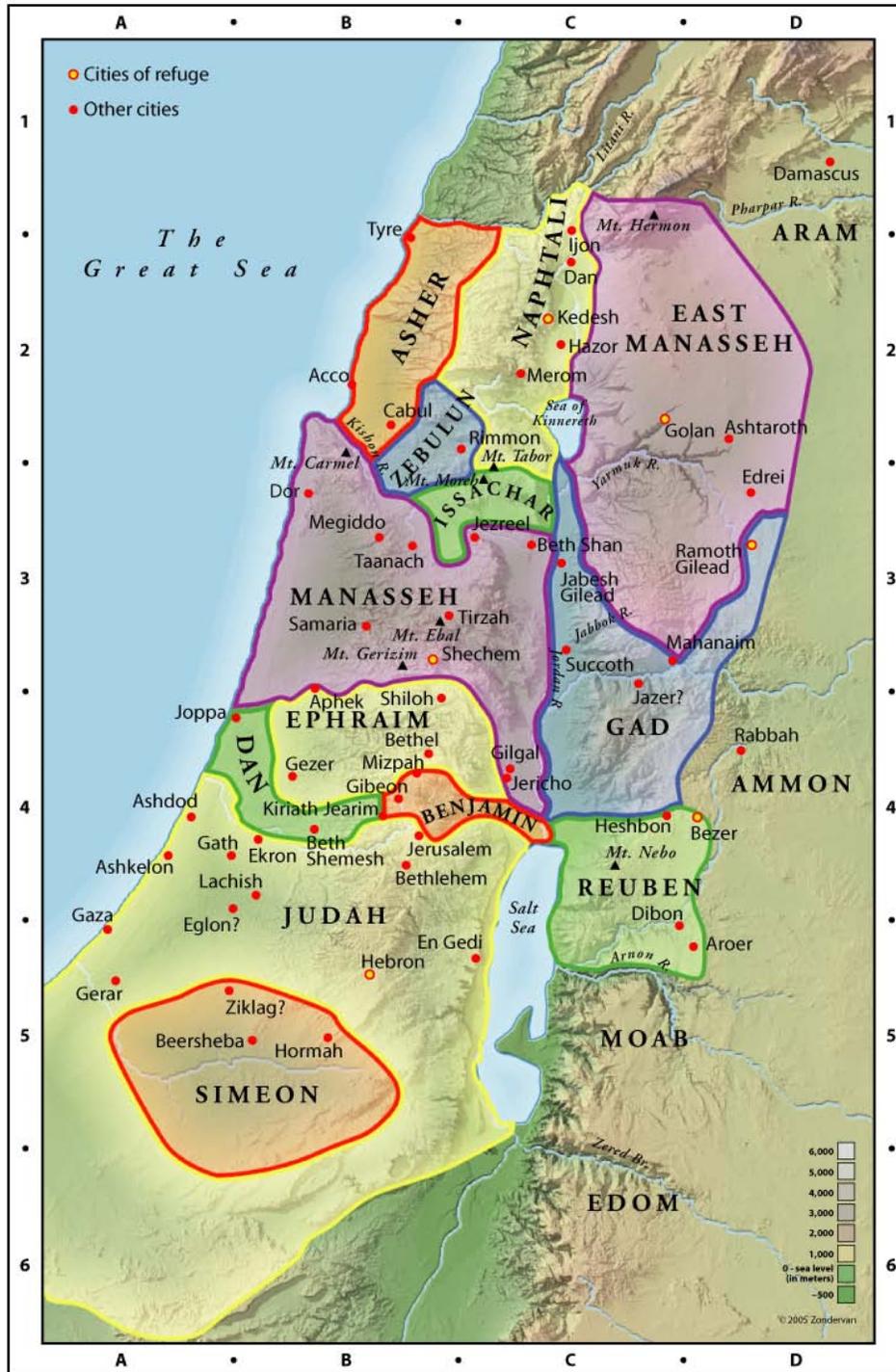
1. At which two places did Joshua arrange for the distribution of the land of Canaan to the various tribes? What prearranged method for distribution had been given through Moses?
2. Are any reasons suggested as to why the distribution was made at two places?
3. Which tribes received their inheritance at Gilgal? In what respect were these tribes preeminent? Who was granted a special claim?
4. What command had the Lord given to Israel concerning the presence of Canaanites within the land? What signs of weakness were already becoming apparent at this time concerning this command?
5. Where was the tabernacle set up? How was the procedure of apportionment reorganized here? Why?
6. Approximately where were each of the six cities of refuge located?
7. Which of the three families of the Levites received the most cities in the apportionment? Why?

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Be able to locate on a map the approximate area which each tribe received as its inheritance, as well as the name and place of the 6 cities of refuge. See the powerpoint on the location of the tribes.

This is an appropriate time to consider the geography of Israel. The geography powerpoint provides a supplemental lesson on this topic.

Map 4: LAND OF THE TWELVE TRIBES



CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE THE EASTERN TRIBES RETURN; JOSHUA'S FAREWELLS (Jos 22-24)

JOSHUA 22

v. 1-8 “Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh and said to them ...” Joshua dismisses the tribes whose portion of inheritance is east of Jordan. They have fulfilled their pledge to help with the conquest west of Jordan. Joshua admonishes (v. 5) and blesses (v. 6) them.

v.10-13 They “built an imposing altar there by the Jordan.” The remaining tribes are aroused by this act. Is this contrary to Leviticus 17:8-9 and Deuteronomy 12:4-14? Is this an idolatrous act? Before taking abrupt military action against these 2½ tribes, however, they decide to send a delegation of 10 headmen, led by Phinehas, son of the high priest Eleazar, to investigate.

Phinehas, incidentally, is the one who thrust a javelin through the adulterous Israelite and Midianite woman at Shittim, when Israel joined in the idolatrous and adulterous worship of Baal Peor with the Moabites (Nu 25:4-11). There 24,000 Israelites died in a plague.

v. 17 “Was not the sin of Peor enough for us?”

v. 21-29 Under oath to El, Elohim, and Yahweh (v. 22) the 2½ tribes deny that they wished to offer sacrifices upon the altar. It was rather to serve as a “witness,” reminding the eastern tribes of their kinship with the western tribes, and that they must still worship at a central place.

v. 30-33 Even zealous Phinehas is satisfied with the explanation.

v. 34 The altar is called ED (Hebrew עֵד – “witness,” “testimony”).

Note: How should we evaluate this building of ED? Was it a legitimate act expressive of tribal unity (Blair)? Was it a needless, presumptuous deed of pride (Pfeiffer)? Was it, if not wrong in itself, an ill-advised cause of offense (Edersheim)? There seems to be no reason not to take the Transjordanian tribes explanation and the other tribes' acceptance of it at face value.

Daechsel grants that the building of the altar may have been well-intentioned, but revealed two weaknesses on Israel's part:

1. A carelessness on the part of those who built the altar for failing to consult with their brothers in advance;
2. A shortsightedness on the part of the other tribes for immediately presupposing the worst intention on the part of their brethren.

On both sides: How quickly such human weaknesses can tear brothers apart!

JOSHUA 23 and 24

In Chapter 23 Joshua assembles the elders and chiefs of Israel at Shiloh for a word of farewell. Here he

exhorts to faithful observance of the Law, warning against intermarriage with Gentiles and against idolatry. Note Joshua's stirring words in v. 10!

In Chapter 24 Joshua assembles the nation's leaders at Shechem for a renewal of the covenant. This involves the usual historical introduction, exhortation to faithfulness, and the people's response.

Both addresses must have taken place 10-20 years after the apportionment of tribal allotments. Was Israel's sense of dedication failing?

The meeting at Shiloh stressed national commitment to Yahweh as God. Shechem emphasized personal covenant renewal on the part of every individual.

Chapter 23 has good material for a text on national commitment, as on Thanksgiving Day ... Chapter 24 has the unforgettable words: "Choose for yourselves this day ... As for me and my household ...," a text for Family Commitment.

Shechem, the place of covenant renewal and deposit of the covenant under an oak tree (ch. 24:25-28), is of course of historical significance:

1. It was at Shechem that the Lord appeared to Abram upon his arrival in to Canaan, and where Abram built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord (Gn 12:6-8).
2. It was at Shechem that Jacob buried the teraphim under the oak tree (Gn 35:3-4).
3. It was Shechem, between Ebal and Gerizim, that Joshua renewed the covenant of Israel with the Lord (Jos 8:30-35), according to the Lord's explicit directives in Deuteronomy 11 and 27.

Here the statutes of the covenant-renewal were now inscribed on a large stele and set up beneath the oak tree. Unfortunately we have no copy of this covenant renewal.

In Chapter 24:29-30 we have the record of Joshua's death at age 110 and his burial at Timnath Serah. In v. 32 we have the record of the burial of Joseph's bones at Shechem, and in v. 33 the death of Eleazar is reported and the succession of his son Phinehas as high priest.

Evaluating Joshua's life one can agree with Edersheim, who sees in Joshua's life a "singleness of purpose, directness, and decision" corresponding to his name: "Yahweh is help!" While lacking the greatness of Moses, he carries out his assignments unswervingly. He has a job to do, and he does it.

Yet Joshua's work was but a beginning. The conquest and division of Canaan was his sole task, yet incomplete insofar as that the individual tribes still needed to carry on what was begun. His work resulted in "a rest begun, but not completed."

"And so the name and work of Joshua pointed forward to the fullness in Christ, alike by what it was and by what it was not, and this in entire accordance with the whole character and object of the Old Testament" (Edersheim, *Bible History*, OT, Vol. III, p. 104).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Jos 22-24)

1. What strange incident nearly destroyed Israel's unity as the eastern tribes returned to their

apportionment?

2. How was this matter finally settled? What weaknesses does this reveal on the part of those involved?
3. At which two places did Joshua hold special assemblies before his death? What was the purpose of each assembly?
4. Why was Shechem especially appropriate for covenant renewal? Show how the ancient steps for covenant renewal were fulfilled at this assembly.
5. Where was Joshua buried? Whose bones were also buried in Shechem? Who was buried in Gibeah?

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Give an evaluation of Joshua's importance for Israel.

Select a text from these chapters for:

1. Farewell
2. Family Commitment
3. Thanksgiving

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR JUDGES (Jdg 1-5)

The book of Judges (שופטים) is the second book of the Former Prophets (*Nebiim Rishonim*), reminding us that we are here again dealing with a record of prophetic history.

The title comes from the Hebrew שָׁפֵט (to judge) or שֹׁפֵט (a judge). The word itself not only means to “pass judgment,” as a judge does in court when deciding a case, but also to “execute judgment,” as a leader or ruler does when carrying out acts of deliverance or vindication in order that justice might prevail. (See use of שָׁפֵט in Ps 26:1; 43:1 etc.)

Thus the judges of Israel whose record is found in this book were special leaders, often military heroes, chosen by God to deliver his people from oppression. Sometimes after carrying out their act of deliverance they continued to rule over Israel many years (Othniel, Gideon et al.). Sometimes they served only to drive away Israel's enemies or relieve its oppression in a time of crisis (Shamgar, Samson). Some were great national heroes (Samson), while of others we have no record of great warlike deeds, but simply the fact that they judged Israel a certain number of years (Tola, Jair). In one case, at least, a judge happened to have been a prophetess (Deborah).

This was God's way of ruling when Israel was a true theocracy, not confined by any system of hereditary rule but with rulers chosen directly by God. In some cases two or more judges ruled contemporaneously – one east of Jordan while the other served west of Jordan – each acting in a restricted tribal area rather than over all of Israel. The further Israel gets from the more ordered time of Joshua, the more chaotic the situation becomes, with more judges ruling contemporaneously.

PURPOSE

The book of Judges shows us how God preserved his covenant people in the promised land from the time of Joshua to the time of Samuel (ca. 350 years).

GENERAL CONTENT

The book of Judges does not give us a connected history of Israel as a whole, but rather presents a series of individual historical sketches in order to show the religious and moral degeneration, social defects, and national peril affecting the people of Israel on the one hand – as well as the repeated interventions of God for the purpose of preserving his people during the period of settling the promised land on the other.

The book names twelve individuals who are judges in the full sense of the word. Six of them are called major judges because a whole episode is devoted to them (Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson). The other six are referred to as minor judges because little or nothing is said about them in the book (Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon). Eli and Samuel, who may overlap the last judges, may be classified as judges, but they are not treated until the book of Samuel. Barak, Deborah's military leader, and Abimelech, Gideon's son, are included in some listings, but in a strict sense are not to be considered as judges.

TIME OF JUDGES

It is impossible to establish a consecutive chronology of the period of the Judges. To add together the years of the twelve judges consecutively results in a total of years between the Exodus and the building of the Temple about 70-100 years longer than the 480 years mentioned in 1 Kings 6:1 (Wilderness = 40 years; Conquest = 10 to 20 years; the twelve Judges = 410 years; Eli = 40 years; Samuel = 20 years; Saul = 20-40 years; David = 40 years; Solomon = 4 years.). Some of the judges, as mentioned previously, ruled simultaneously in different areas.

Luther reckons the time "from the death of Moses to Samuel" as 350 years, stating that Acts 13:20 contains "a textual error" when it gives 450 years instead of 350. Luther's understanding of this passage is based upon a faulty division of the text between v. 20 and v. 21 of Acts 13, leading to his misunderstanding of the era to which the 450 years refer. The NIV interprets the 450 years as a round number referring to the years in Egypt and the Wilderness. Unger places the time of Othniel, the first judge, at 1361 BC and the time of Saul at 1020 BC, indicating a span of 341 years during which judges ruled over Israel. This agrees closely with the estimate of Luther. Unger adds, however, that "these dates cannot be established with certainty" (*Archaeology and the OT*, p. 179-187).

It should be noted that even a telescoped chronology of the judges does not allow a 13th century Exodus.

We recognize these time difficulties, aware that the Scriptures themselves never intended to give us a precise chronological table of judges in consecutive order, since the judges did not rule in chronological order (Jephthah, east of Jordan, overlapped Eli, Samson, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samuel west of Jordan – Jdg 10:7; 1 Sm 4:18). It is more important to appreciate the overall picture of this time element, a span covering several hundred years at least. This exceeds the historical time span of the United States of America, a fact which is often not fully realized or appreciated when considering the time span of the judges. And during this period of adjustment in a new land God took care of his own, in spite of their repeated perversity.

AUTHORSHIP

Again, as with Joshua, we don't know who wrote the book. Some say Samuel. Since the book covers a period of hundreds of years, there was a need for the writer to make use of sources. The internal makeup of the book testifies, however, to a single historian/author.

An oft-repeated refrain in the book: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25) indicates by implication that the book was written at a time when there was a king in Israel.

According to Judges 1:21 the book (or the source the historian used here) was written while Jebusites were still occupying Jerusalem. Since the Jebusites were not finally driven out of Jerusalem until David's time (2 Sm 5:6ff), it is possible that the book was written before David's conquest, no doubt some time in the early days of the monarchy.

OUTLINE

Theme: GOD PRESERVES HIS PEOPLE (HIS KINGDOM) DURING THE TIME OF THE JUDGES

The book of Judges is organized around repeated cycles of idolatry, oppression, deliverance, and repentance.

INTRO – Possession of land not complete, apostasy growing (Ch 1-2)

A. Failure to purge the land.

B. Religious apostasy.

BODY – Israel's sin and God's grace (7 cycles) (12 judges) (Ch 3-16)

Cycle One: Othniel defeats Aram.

Cycle Two: Ehud defeats Moab / Shamgar

Cycle Three: Deborah (with Barak) defeats Canaan

Cycle Four: Gideon defeats Midian (Abimelech the anti-judge) / Tola, Jair

Cycle Five: Jephthah defeats Ammon / Ibzan, Elon, Abdon.

Cycle Six: Samson versus the Philistines

Appendix – Breakdown in family, tribe, nation, and clergy (Ch 17-21)

A. Micah and the Danites' religious corruption

B. The Benjamites' moral corruption

(Treating Abimelech / Tola / Jair as a cycle would produce seven cycles.)

The book of Judges has been characterized as "so earthy, so puzzling, so primitive, so violent, so strange" (Davis). The immorality of many of the leading characters shows that the real hero of the book is the Lord.

Judges 21: 25 *In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.*

As prophetic history the book is a masterpiece. The introductory chapters set the tone: Israel's laxity in finishing the task of possessing the promised land as God's covenant people, and God's urgent warnings concerning the laxity. The six episodes demonstrate the repeated periods of oppression and deliverance which characterized this period. The appendices by means of two incidents told in detail illustrate the extent of Israel's moral decay during the time of the judges.

The historical-critical approach to Judges is naturally very negative. The opening first chapters, for example, are described as "a late collection of old traditions" which are "historically inaccurate" and

which “conflict with the report of Joshua itself.”

Approaching these chapters, however, on the basis of information from Joshua (i.e., many pockets of Canaan were still occupied by Canaanites; complete occupation by Israel on a tribal basis was still necessary; Israel’s failure to meet this duty led to endless trouble), we find that Judges fits in remarkably well where Joshua left off. These same chapters thus serve the author’s purpose of presenting the rationale of the entire book in a most descriptive way.

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JUDGES 1

This chapter describes the political/military failure of Israel. Seven times the Israelites “did not drive out” the Canaanites. They operated like a surgeon that only removes part of the cancer

v. 1-7 “After the death of Joshua ...” The first phase of conquest is ended. The individual occupation by tribes is to follow. Judah and Simeon, following the Lord’s directions (Urim and Thummim?) resolve to take up the challenge and meet with initial success. Adoni-Bezek in Bezek (Hebron?) is not only captured, but mutilated. Though this act may seem like unnecessary cruelty, the mutilation probably made him ineligible to reclaim his throne, thus making him no threat to Israel’s domination.

v. 8 Even Jerusalem is taken in this first vigorous effort! According to v. 21 of this same chapter, however, this initial success was short-lived. The cities were taken (לָכַד) but not possessed (יָרַשׁ).

v. 9-15 This flashback is a parallel passage with Joshua 15:13-20, connecting the two accounts, and shows how Caleb occupied his heritage at Hebron.

v. 16 The Kenites, related to Moses through Zipporah, who accompanied the Israelites, settle for the time being in the Negev. The “City of Palms” is Jericho (or perhaps En Gedi/Tamar) (Dt 34:3, 2 Chr 28:15).

v. 19-21 A turning point. The men of Judah are unable to drive out the people from the plains because of their “iron chariots.” The Benjamites fail to dislodge the Jebusites from Jerusalem.

v. 27-35 The situation deteriorates even more. Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali do not drive the Canaanites out, rather forcing them to become tributary. Dan is unable to cope with the Amorites.

Judges 1 gives us the background for the entire period: Israel fails to carry out the Lord’s directives to drive the Canaanites out. This failure in military matters leads to the moral decay described in the next chapter. The infection of Canaanite idolatry, which the Lord wishes to have eradicated, is left to spread.

JUDGES 2

This chapter describes the religious failure of Israel.

v. 1-5 The Angel of the Lord, the same who appeared to Joshua at Gilgal (v. 1), appears to the Israelites at Bokim (בְּכִים – “the weepers”) and gives a stern warning concerning their failure to break down heathen altars. First: tolerance; next: syncretism; finally: gross idolatry. Because Israel fails to drive the Canaanites out, the heathen nations will be “thorns” in their sides. From Israel’s “weeping” repentance

the place derives its name. Unfortunately the spirit of repentance doesn't last. Repentance is more than tears.

v. 6-23 Following a brief recapitulation of Joshua's death and burial – again connecting Joshua with Judges – the pattern is unfolded concerning “another generation” (v. 10) which does not know the Lord ... “They did evil ... forsook the Lord ... provoked the Lord to anger ... served Baal and the Ashteroths.”

Therefore “the Lord handed them over to raiders, who plundered them” (v. 14).

“Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders” (v. 16).
“Yet they would not listen ...” (v. 17).

The Lord therefore declares that he will use the Canaanite nations “to test Israel and see whether they will keep the way of the Lord” (v. 22).

This concludes the introductory section of Judges, which sets the pattern for the series of six episodes which follows.

JUDGES 3

v. 1-6 The background information is recapitulated. The enemy nations are mentioned by name. Instead of extermination – cohabitation.

EPISODE 1 OTHNIEL

v. 7-11 This episode is typical. The oppressor is Cushan-Rishathaim (Rishathaim means “the doubly wicked one” probably not his real name, but an uncomplimentary nickname he received from the Israelites in general or from one of their prophets), king of Aram (North Syria, Mesopotamia). The time of oppression is 8 years. The judge-deliverer is OTHNIEL of the tribe of Judah, Caleb's nephew. Moved by the Spirit of the Lord Othniel rescues Israel, leading them successfully in battle. “So the land had peace for forty years.”

Othniel has been called the “boring judge” since we know of no misconduct on his part, and we know little about the oppressor, Cushan Rishathaim. In contrast, the story of Ehud is one of the most colorful.

EPISODE 2 EHUD

v. 12-21 The oppressor is Eglon, king of Moab (joined by the Ammonites and Amalekites), who conquers the City of Palms (the Jericho oasis, perhaps so-called to distinguish it from the vacant tell) and oppresses Israel 18 years. The judge-deliverer is EHUD, a left-handed man of the tribe of Benjamin. By means of a trick, making use of his left-handed facility, Ehud kills Eglon in his summer palace, escapes, rallies Israel's forces, cuts off the Moabites at the Jordan and kills about 10,000 of them. “And the land had peace for 80 years.”

The story is quite graphic. Two questions that arise are where the sword exited Eglon's body and how Ehud exited the palace. Did Ehud jump off the porch or exit through the toilet pit? Note on the life-styles of the rich and famous: the palace had an indoor toilet on the second floor.

v. 31 After Ehud came SHAMGAR, son of Anath. He has a foreign name. Perhaps he was not an Israelite. He struck down 600 Philistines with an oxgoad. “He too saved Israel.” This is all we know about the third of the judges, whom we include in Episode 2. This incident is the first recorded military

skirmish of the Israelites with the Philistines. It comes about the time that Egyptian records tell us that an influx of Philistines came from the somewhere out in the Mediterranean and occupied southwest Canaan. This confrontation begins a long series of battles between these two enemies lasting until the coming of the Assyrians.

Anat is the name of a goddess, but may also be a place name.

JUDGES 4

EPISODE 3 DEBORAH

v. 1-16 Jabin, king of Hazor, a Canaanite king (not the Jabin of Jos 11, who lived 100 years prior to this!), and his army-commander Sisera, with 900 iron chariots under his command, cruelly oppressed Israel for 20 years ... The dynastic name Jabin has been found in a text from Hazor.

DEBORAH, a prophetess (אִשָּׁה נְבִיאָה), was also a judge who decided Israel's disputes under a palm tree. She called for BARAK, a Naphtalite, to lead Israel's forces against the Canaanites, but because Barak insisted that Deborah go along to battle prophesied the victory would come at the hand of a "woman". (The "woman," however, was not Deborah, but Jael, as we learn later.) Barak with 10,000 men routed Sisera at the stream Kishon, which flows from the Valley of Jezreel into the Great Sea. According to Deborah's song in Judges 5:20-22, the Lord caused a flash flood to sweep away Sisera's forces.

v. 17-24 Here we have the woman who will share the honors of victory: Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite (introduced in v. 11). When Sisera seeks refuge in Jael's tent, she kills him with a tent-peg. Sisera may have trusted Jael because her husband had allied himself with Jabin, perhaps as a weapon maker. The Kenites possibly were metal smiths.

Ethically Jael's act has been variously evaluated, although the general consensus seems to go in the direction of a heroic act, inspired by human zeal. It is deceptively implemented, yet used by God to accomplish his purposes. Sisera was not exactly Mr. Clean (see 5:31)

Verse 23 relates the important fact: "On that day *God* subdued Jabin."

JUDGES 5

Of Deborah's prophetic activity we know only that she foretold Jael's deed and celebrated it in this song.

Deborah's Song of Victory is divided into: an introductory summons to praise the Lord (v. 2-3); section 1 describing Israel's rise and fall as a nation (v. 4-11); section 2 giving the call to battle, with varying tribal reactions (v. 12-18); section 3 portraying the details of the battle (v. 19-27), section 4 describing the sad aftermath for Sisera's mother who awaits the return of a victorious army (v. 28-30); and the final expression of hope for continued victory for God's people.

The song is full of vivid contrasts and striking pictures, revealing details of the conflict not told in the previous chapter (the heroism of some tribes and the cowardice of others; the part played by the elements in Sisera's defeat, etc.).

Psalm 68 has affinities to this psalm.

"Then the land had peace forty years."

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Intro. / Jdg 1-5)

1. Which basic twofold meaning lies in the Hebrew word “judge”? What service did the judges of Israel primarily carry out? Under whose direction? Under what form of government?
2. How did the judges differ in the manner in which their services are described for us in the book of Judges?
3. What approximate time-span is covered during Israel’s history under the judges? How do we arrive at this time estimate?
4. How many judges are presented to us in the book of Judges? Give their names according to the six episodes into which their service is divided.
5. Why is it impossible to establish a consecutive chronology of the rule of the judges?
6. What do we know about the authorship of Judges and the approximate time when the book was written?
7. Give a basic outline of the book of Judges, with a brief explanation of the general contents of each part.
8. What kind of background information is contained in the first chapter of Judges? Which statement occurs a number of times to summarize the chapter’s prophetic message?
9. What kind of background information is contained in chapter two? What warning did the Lord himself give? Where? Which fourfold succession of events summarizes the subject matter of each episode of Israel’s history during the time of the judges?
10. Who was the first judge? From whom did he rescue Israel? How long had Israel been oppressed? How long did he rule?
11. Who was the second judge? Whom did he oppose? By what clever ruse did he kill the oppressor? How long did he rule?
12. Describe the act of deliverance of the judge briefly included in this second episode.
13. Which judge was a prophetess? Who served as her captain? Describe the remarkable victory of Israel over the enemy in this episode.
14. Describe the way in which the prophecy of Deborah was fulfilled when she said to Barak: “The honor will not be yours, for the Lord will hand Sisera over to a woman” (4:9).
15. Give some of the details of battle portrayed by Deborah in her Song of Victory (ch. 5).

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE JUDGES, EPISODES FOUR AND FIVE (Jdg 6-12)

JUDGES 6

EPISODE 4 GIDEON

v. 1-7 The situation: The Midianites (descendants of Keturah, Gn 25:2; 26:1-6) and also Amalekites (descendants of Esau) oppressed Israel from the east by periodically invading and destroying crops. The Israelites are forced to seek refuge in the hills. The Midianites are described as “like swarms of locusts.”

v. 7-10 A prophet is sent by the Lord to reprove the people for their idolatry.

v. 11-24 The angel of the Lord (a theophany, v. 16) appears to GIDEON who is threshing wheat in a winepress (i.e., secretly in a hole in the ground). He commissions him as a “mighty warrior” to deliver Israel. Gideon is reluctant: “My clan is the weakest in Manasseh ... I am the least in my family.” (According to Jos 17:2 the family of Abiezer is of Manasseh West). He asks for a sign. The Lord complies by miraculously consuming Gideon’s offering in a flash of fire.

Gideon receives a call somewhat reminiscent of the call of Moses, but Gideon is no Moses.

v. 25-32 The Lord now tests Gideon, asking Gideon to offer “the second bull” from his father’s herd and to tear down his father’s altar to Baal and Asherah pole. Gideon does so. The variant reading in the NIV does not materially affect the meaning of the event.

Joash, Gideon’s father, although himself an idolater, refuses to give Gideon into the hands of the superstitious hostile crowd, saying, “If Baal is God, let him fight for himself!” Hence, Gideon’s name Jerub-Baal. (“Let Baal fight!” – יִרְבֵּעַל).

v. 33-35 Gideon calls together an army of the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, Naphtali, and from his own Abiezrite family of Manasseh. The enemy is camped in the Valley of Jezreel, the famous battleground.

v. 36-40 Gideon requests and receives two additional signs (fleece wet, fleece dry). The text makes no comment on the propriety or impropriety of requesting these signs. The request does seem to be evidence of a wavering faith.

JUDGES 7

v. 1-7 The original forces aligned against each other are 135,000 Midianites (8:10) vs. 32,000 Israelites. The Lord says, “You are too many ...” The fearful ones, 22,000, were sent home, leaving 10,000.

The Lord says, “There are still too many ...” Only those who “lapped with their hands” while drinking water, 300, are kept. Those who get down on their knees to drink were sent home. Commentators have speculated much about the significance of the criteria for choosing the 300 (lapping a sign of vigilance? kneeling a habit of idolaters?). There does not seem to be any specific point of virtue in the 300. The test is simply reported as a way of whittling down the army to a relative handful.

Thus the odds are now 135,000 v. 300! How the sifting was done is immaterial. The Lord wanted to show: “This is my battle!” The 300 do not do much more than blow their own horns (Davis).

v. 9-14 Gideon in the Midianite camp, hears a Midianite soldier tell a dream: “A loaf of barley bread (symbolic of poor Israel) falls on a Midianite tent and destroys it.” This dream conveys the fear of the Midianites.

v. 15-25 The battle-plan is well known. Edersheim tells the story dramatically (*Old Testament Bible History*, p. 141). When pursuing the distraught enemy, Gideon asks the assistance of the Ephraimites. Gideon pursues one body of men under Zebah and Zalmunna on the east of Jordan. Ephraim overtakes another group led by Oreb und Zeeb.

JUDGES 8

v. 1-3 The Ephraimites complain because they were not asked to fight sooner. Gideon diplomatically replies, “Are not the gleanings of Ephraim better than the full grape harvest of Abiezer?” In other words, “Didn’t your efforts at the end of the battle accomplish more than mine, who with my tribe fought the entire battle?” The resentment of the petulant Ephraimites subsides.

v. 4-21 Gideon’s 300 troops, pursuing the fleeing Midianites under Zebah and Zalmunna east of Jordan, request food from the people of Succoth and the people of Peniel, only to be refused.

After defeating the remaining 15,000 Midianites in a surprise attack at Karkor, Gideon severely punishes the people of Succoth and Peniel. The flesh of the people of Succoth was torn “with desert thorns and briars.” The tower of Peniel was torn down and the men of the town killed. Midianite kings Zebah and Zalmunna are brought back, and when his oldest son Jether refuses to enact vengeance upon them, Gideon himself kills them with his sword.

The battles of Gideon were something of an Antietam or Gettysburg moment for Israel (the defeat of Sihon and Og were Lexington and Concord). These battles were remembered as pivotal by the psalmist and the prophets (Ps 83:9-11, Is 9:4, Is 10:26).

v. 22-25 Gideon is offered the kingship of Israel. He refuses. But strangely, he requests Ishmaelite plunder (gold earrings) to make an ephod, a shoulder-dress worn by high priests, woven through with golden thread. He uses this in Ophrah, his town, in order “to obtain revelations from the Lord” (according to Keil), not as an image to worship (according to Gesenius). In either case it is a form of unauthorized worship.

v. 28-31 Gideon ruled 40 years, had many wives (70), one of whom was a concubine who bore him a son, Abimelech, who became claimant to Gideon’s rulership after he died.

v. 33-35 After Gideon’s death Baal worship soon takes over!

The idolatry of Gideon’s family, his personal weaknesses, the cowardice of the eastern tribes, and the arrogance of Ephraim all reinforce the truth that God’s strength is made perfect in weakness.

Gideon presents an interesting, heroic, and yet tragic figure. Gideon faced four battles: against Baal, against the Midianites, against uncooperative Israelites, and against himself. He was least successful in the last.

He destroyed the shrine of Baal but later made his own illegitimate shrine.

Coming out of a humble background, hesitant to accept the Lord’s call to lead his people out of the

oppressive domination of foreigners, Gideon does accomplish great things in the face of tremendous opposition, trusting in the Lord's power to deliver.

His act of placating the Ephraimites shows abilities of leadership and diplomacy. Wisely he also refuses to be made ruler over Israel. Yet at the same time he acts much like a king. Why was his son named, Abimelech, "my father is king." He sets up a spurious kind of worship in his home city, arrogating to himself high-priestly functions, apparently out of vanity, reluctant to give up a leadership role entirely, and motivated by a weak spiritual understanding.

Gideon's latter days are not especially commendable. Although Israel enjoyed outward peace for his remaining 40 years, an inner deterioration set in. His many wives and concubines are indications of something less than a life of moderation. His ephod became an object of idolatry. His surviving 70 sons came to a tragic end.

Gideon's family, Gideon, and the people of Israel are all very disappointing. God's people are often a disappointment in critical moments, but God's strength prevails. If you don't understand that, you won't last long in the ministry.

Judges 8:28 is the last rest in the book of Judges.

JUDGES 9

In the aftermath of Gideon's rule as judge we have an unfortunate story of gross treachery amidst chaotic conditions following "Jerubaal's" death. Its cast of characters reminds us of the *dramatis personae* of modern thrillers and horror stories. They are:

Abimelech, Jerubaal's son by a Shechemite concubine, who aspires to be king, and after murdering his 70 brothers "upon one stone" (possibly some kind of sacrificial altar), is declared king by the Shechemites at the monument set up by Joshua as a witness to the covenant between God and Israel (v. 1-6).

Jotham is the one brother of Abimelech who escapes. From the top of Mount Gerizim he shouts a parable: The trees wish to anoint a king. Three deserving trees (olive, fig, grapevine) demur. The bramble, which gives neither fruit nor shade, which wounds those who touch it and is fit only for burning, accepts. With bitter scorn Jotham closes his parable, prophesying fire out of Abimelech which will destroy Shechem (v. 7-21).

Gaal leads the opposition to Abimelech. After 3 years of rule Abimelech's "honeymoon" is over. His lording it over the people creates hostility. Chaos results. At a sacrificial feast to an idol Gaal's tongue is loosed and he threatens to overthrow Abimelech (v. 22-29).

Zebul is the "middle man." He, as mayor of Shechem, provokes a fight between Abimelech and Gaal. The initial victory belongs to Abimelech, and Shechem is destroyed in the battle. Abimelech also attacks the city of Thebez. While storming the tower, a woman drops a millstone on Abimelech's head, cracking his skull. Abimelech then asks his armor-bearer to kill him with a sword, and thus ends the gory tale of the bramble king (v. 30-35).

Thus Israel's chaotic condition at this time in its history is vividly portrayed. Seducers are seduced. Rebels overthrow rebels. God enacts his just retribution upon those who try to thwart the accomplishment of his purposes. In his economy of judgment God often uses one pack of sinners to destroy another.

JUDGES 10

v. 1-2 TOLA, of the tribe of Issachar (Gn 46:13; Nu 26:23), dwelling in Mount Ephraim, led Israel 23 years. We know little about him. Was he a warrior or administrator? Perhaps he was the kind of quiet, colorless functionary Israel needed after the likes of Abimelech.

v. 3-5 JAIR, a Gileadite, of Manasseh East, judged 22 years (confer Nu 32:41). His 30 sons ride on 30 donkeys indicating their high rank, but also giving evidence of the prevalence of polygamy among the ruling class.

We have no more information concerning these two judges. It is possible that their rules overlapped, one west and the other east of Jordan.

EPISODE 5 JEPHTHAH

v. 6-17 The introduction to the next episode emphasizes the depths of Israel's condition. Idolatry is rampant. Seven false deities are named (v. 6). Oppression is great. Seven vexed tribes are listed (v. 11). Both east and west are affected by double oppression under Ammonite and Philistine invasions.

Israel confesses its sin (v. 10). The Lord continues to test them with sharp words (v. 11-14). Israel confesses again. This time verbal confession is followed by corresponding action, as Israel also gets rid of its idols. The emphasis, however, is on God's compassion, not Israel's tears.

The Israelites assemble at Mizpah to organize resistance, which introduces the Jephthah account. Mizpah (Lookout Mountain) was a well-known meeting place near Jerusalem. This Mizpah, however may be in the Transjordan (see the NIV Study Bible note).

JUDGES 11

v. 1-3 JEPHTHAH'S background: Jephthah is the illegitimate son of Gilead, of the tribe of Manasseh (Nu 26:29). He runs away and leads a band of adventurous brigands in the land of Tob on the Aramean border.

v. 4-11 The elders of Gilead (the country east of Jordan, not the man) appeal to Jephthah to serve as leader against the Ammonites.

v. 12-28 Jephthah sends a delegation to warn the Ammonites. The gist of his historical resume is this: The Lord of Israel wants the Ammonites, descendants of Lot, spared. The land in question, however, is land which Israel rightfully gained from Sihon, king of the Amorites. "For 300 years Israel occupied Heshbon!" (v. 26). The Ammonites reject this warning.

The reference to Chemosh is puzzling, since Chemosh is usually associated with Moab, and Milcom with Ammon. They may have been essentially the same god, a form of Baal.

Note: the 300 years mentioned support the early Exodus date.

v. 29-40 Jephthah's vow and defeat of the Ammonites.

As the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Jephthah, he advances against the Ammonites. Before going into battle, he vows that if the Lord gives him the victory, "whatever/whoever comes out of the door of my house to meet me will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering."

וְהָיָה הַיּוֹצֵא אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִדִּלְתֵי בֵּיתִי ... וְהָיָה לְיְהוָה וְהָעֲלִיתָהּ עֹלָה:

Jephthah smashes the Ammonites (v. 33). As he returns home, Jephthah's daughter, an only child, comes to meet him (v. 34). Jephthah tells the daughter his vow (v. 35). She requests to go into the hills for two months to mourn her virginity ("because she would never marry" v. 38). She returns and "he did to her as he had vowed. And she was a virgin" (v. 39). Jephthah's single daughter is a contrast to the many sons of the polygamous judges. This heightens the sense of tragedy.

Question: "In what sense did Jephthah keep his vow?"

Luther: "The text is clear enough." He interprets Jephthah's action as actually offering his daughter as a human sacrifice. The following arguments are presented in support of this view:

- The most natural reading of verses 30, 31, and 39 are that Jephthah offered up his daughter as a burnt offering.
- Language of the vow seems inappropriate for animals.
- "Coming forth to meet" someone would seem to be more naturally associated with a human agent.
- Jephthah made this vow fully aware of the Israelite custom of maidens coming out to greet a victor after battle.
- Context shows that Jephthah intended to vow something special.
- The normal usage of the Hebrew word עֹלָה is for a burnt offering (See 2 Kings 3).
- Jephthah expressed grief when his daughter met him; the text suggests he was about to lose his only child.
- The text indicates that he fulfilled his vow.
- Nothing in the Old Testament mentions celibacy and cloister-like withdrawal from the world in consequence of a vow.
- The daughter has two months to lament, not a lifetime of celibacy.
- It is not inconceivable that a God-fearing man such as Jephthah would ever perform such an act. "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson all inflict self-made tragedies on their families.
- This was the unanimous view of the early commentators, Jewish and Christian.

More recently, many commentators have favored the view of a "spiritual sacrifice" of his daughter. The following arguments are presented in favor of this view.

- The type of sacrifice specified here is OLAH (עֹלָה – Lv 1), which required a male victim.
- The Mosaic Law strongly forbids human sacrifice (Lv 18:21; 20:2-5; Dt 12:31; 18:10).
- Olah involves the idea of complete surrender, a whole-offering, in distinction to offerings where only a part is given to the Lord.
- This can be interpreted in a spiritual sense: surrender to a life of virginity in dedication to the Lord (Keil).
- The text and context support the idea of a spiritual offering, i.e., dedication to the Lord in a life of virginity.
- Otherwise: Why go away two months to "bemoan virginity"? Also, why, according to the text, does it say that Jephthah kept his vow, followed by the words: "And she was a virgin"?

- In those days women did dedicate their service to the Lord in special ministrations in the tabernacle (Ex 38:8; 1 Sa 2:22), contrary to the arguments of those who claim that this was not practiced.
- Jephthah's grief is understandable, and can be interpreted either way.
- Jephthah was a man led by the Spirit. See He 11:32 - Jephthah's inclusion among the "heroes of faith."

Argument about this is not likely to end anytime soon. It seems best to stick with a literal understanding. The "spiritual sacrifice" view seems to be motivated largely by the horror of a literal understanding, rather than anything in the text.

JUDGES 12

v. 1-4 Characteristically (Jdg 8:1) the Ephraimites complain that Jephthah did not include them in his war against the Ammonites, and threaten to "burn his house." They insult the Gileadites as not real Israelites. Jephthah who had never been to charm school or learned the importance to bolstering people's self-esteem gives Ephraim the war they wanted.

v. 4-6 Jephthah's forces defeat the Ephraimites. As they try to escape back to their homeland across the Jordan, Jephthah's men control the fords. To ascertain whether or not people crossing the Jordan are Ephraimites, they are required to speak the word שִׁבְּוֹלֶת, "shibboleth/sibboleth." The Ephraimites pronounce this word with an "S" sound instead of "SH" (סִבְּוֹלֶת). The word itself can mean "ear of corn" (Keil) or "stream" (Edersheim), "floods" (NIV note).

42,000 Ephraimites are killed in this needless war!

v. 7 Jephthah continues to lead Israel six more years, until his death.

v. 8-15 IBZAN of Bethlehem (not the "Bethlehem" in Judea, but the "Bethlehem" in Zebulun – Jos 19:15) led Israel 7 years.

ELON of Zebulun led Israel 10 years.

ABDON, an Ephraimite, led Israel 8 years.

Nothing else besides a few details concerning family and burial is mentioned concerning these three judges. There is no mention of peace in this era.

The view is generally held that these men served as contemporaries of Samson, ruling farther to the east and north of his territory.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Jdg 6-12)

1. How long did the Midianites oppress Israel? In what manner?
2. Why was Gideon reluctant to accept the Lord's call? What initial sign did the Lord give him to assure him of his presence and power?
3. How did the Lord then test Gideon? Tell how Gideon received the name Jerub-Baal.

4. What additional signs did Gideon receive? What attribute does the Lord demonstrate in all this?
5. To which tribes did Gideon's call to arms go out? Describe how Gideon's army was sifted from 32,000 to 300. What did the Lord want to demonstrate with this strange procedure?
6. How was Gideon encouraged through his secret visit to the enemy camp? Outline his battle plan and its execution.
7. Which tribe was unhappy after the victory? What was Gideon's diplomatic reply?
8. How did Gideon show himself to be at first prudent, and then later unwise after his military successes?
9. Who are the following and what role do they play in the sad aftermath of Gideon's rule?

Abimelech – Jotham – Gaal – Zebul
10. How does Abimelech meet his end? What truth does this story emphasize?
11. Which two judges bring Episode 4 to a close?
12. In which general area does Episode 5 take place? What was Jephthah's background? How did he come to be accepted to serve as judge?
13. What argument does Jephthah use to try to persuade the Ammonites to desist from oppressing Israel? Explain how Judges 11:26 supports the early date of the Exodus.
14. What vow did Jephthah make before his battle with the Ammonites? How do you interpret the statement: And Jephthah did to his daughter as he had vowed (11:39)?
15. What tribe again displayed a jealous and complaining spirit? Describe the "shibboleth" episode.
16. Which three judges conclude Episode 5? What view is generally held concerning their approximate time and place of judgeship?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

See how many of the following proper names of places and people you can identify:

1. Bokim
2. Eglon
3. Adoni-Bezek
4. Peniel
5. Karkor
6. Chemosh
7. Kishon
8. Jabin
9. Heber
10. Makir
11. Jael

12. Oreb
13. Zebah
14. Jether
15. Ophrah
16. Jotham
17. Thebez
18. Gaal
19. Tola
20. Zebul
21. Jair
22. Mizpah
23. Zeeb
24. Heshbon
25. Succoth

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX
SAMSON
TWO APPENDICES
(Jdg 13-21)

JUDGES 13

EPISODE 6 SAMSON

v. 1 The final episode of Judges begins in the usual way: “Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord.” This time the Lord delivers them into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years. There is no appeal from Israel, but God announces a savior.

v. 2-7 SAMSON’S birth is foretold by the Angel of the Lord to a woman of the tribe of Dan. The child is to be a Nazirite for life (Nu 6:1-8): to eat nothing unclean; to drink no strong drink; no razor to touch his head.

v. 8-23 The Angel of the Lord also appears to Manoah, Samson’s father, renewing the promise of a son.

When asked for his name, the angel says: “Truly it is WONDERFUL” (פְּלִיאָה). Compare the name of the Savior in Isaiah 9 (פְּלִיאָה). The NIV “beyond understanding” doesn’t quite catch the meaning.

The Lord does a “wondrous thing” to show his supreme, amazing power, consuming the offering and ascending to heaven in a flame. Note Manoah’s words: “We have seen God” (v. 22). The words in v. 18 and 22 indicate this clearly is another theophany.

v. 24 “The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson.” A wondrous birth, a wondrous child.

v. 25 “And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him ...” The Spirit gave Samson power to perform amazing deeds of heroic strength. We shall evaluate these later. Unfortunately Samson in times of weakness of faith did not always submit to this influence of the Spirit and used his gift for selfish purposes.

JUDGES 14

v. 1-4 Samson’s desire to marry a Philistine woman causes problems for his parents, who know that it is contrary to the law of God to marry a Canaanite (Ex 34:16; Dt 7:3-4; Jos 23:12). What a disappointment this must have been to parents who knew his mission.

“His parents did not know that this was from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines.”

In this case, we are told that Samson sought this alliance as part of a plan in which God would use evil for good. God is not the author of evil (Ja 1:14), but he can use even sinful acts to accomplish his purpose. Roehrs comments: “The impulse to contract a forbidden marriage came from Samson’s disobedient heart. Nevertheless ‘it was the Lord’s doing’ to let this act of human self-will serve his good and gracious will” (*OT Commentary*).

v. 9 “Which ... he ate.” This act of Samson, eating honey out of the carcass of the lion, was also a violation of the Nazirite code – yet a part of accomplishing a purpose for which the Lord sent him: the destruction of the Philistines.

Note: Samson is a unique character, serving a unique purpose. His acts of physical strength and courage, acts which must have been told and retold by the Israelites during those bleak days of servitude, offered much encouragement and kept Israel’s hopes alive.

We shall evaluate these deeds in the light of Samson’s entire life as we conclude his story.

v. 20 Samson’s marriage was not consummated, since it seems that according to custom this would not happen until the seventh day of the wedding feast. Samson, in anger because of his bride’s betrayal of the riddle, kills thirty men, gives their garments to those who “plowed with his heifer” (in order to guess the answer to the riddle), and departs for home before the feast is over. His wife is given to the “best man.” This leads us into Samson’s next mighty act, described in Chapter 15.

JUDGES 15

v. 1-5 Samson, provoked because his bride has been given to another, uses the tails of 300 foxes (some translate שׂוֹעֲלִים – “jackals”) as firebrands to destroy the Philistines’ harvest.

v. 6 The Philistines respond by destroying the Philistine family involved. The irony is that the family betrayed Samson to escape being burned, but they are burned anyway.

v. 7-8 Samson retaliates with a vicious slaughter of many Philistines.

v. 9-13 3,000 men of Judah, with Samson’s compliance, tie Samson and hand him over to the Philistines. The Israelites are cowards and quitters. Samson is not.

v. 14-17 Breaking the cords at Lehi (לְהִי – jaw), Samson kills 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey.

v. 18-19 By a miracle water comes from “a hollow place in Lehi” (not as in the KJV: “an hollow place that was in the jaw”) to revive Samson.

Note: With this chapter Samson’s heroic acts come to a climax, to be followed by a period of decline, when his acts occur out of self-indulgence and lead to his downfall.

The six acts enumerated in this first period:

1. Kills a lion
2. Kills 30 men at Ashkelon (a small beginning of his life’s work).
3. Destroys the Philistines’ harvest with jackals.
4. Smites many at Etam.
5. Burst new cords.
6. Kills 1000 with the jawbone of a donkey.

JUDGES 16

v. 1-3 Samson prostitutes his body as well as God's gift at Gaza. His amazing feat of strength with the city gate accomplishes no purpose versus the Philistines. The Spirit is not mentioned.

v. 4-19 It is not specified whether Delilah was a Philistine or an Israelite collaborator. The latter seems most likely.

Delilah's attempts to entice from Samson the secret of his strength and gets these answers:

1. Seven fresh thongs, or bowstrings (failure).
2. New ropes (failure).
3. Seven braids of hair woven into fabric on the loom, tightened with a pin (failure).
4. Shave off seven braids of hair (success).

v. 21 Samson is captured and his eyes are gouged out.

v. 23-31 At a service of praise to Dagon for the victory over Samson, Samson gives his life in a final heroic act, killing "more when he died than when he lived." He destroys the central pillars which supported the roof and brings down the house on the Philistines.

"He had led Israel 20 years." Here the word **שֹׁפֵט** – "judge" means "obtain security for" or "vindicate by an act of deliverance" (cf. Introduction to Judges).

SAMSON: The life of Samson has been variously interpreted. Much of it remains a mystery. Certain points stand out clearly:

1. Samson was a "judge" in the sense that he was a heroic vindicator, not a jurist or ruler. His judgeship came at the end of this period in Israel's history, when under Eli there was an almost complete disorganization, disintegration, and decay at the sanctuary. Through Samson's heroic deeds God kept Israel's hopes alive!
2. Samson was a mirror in which Israel could see itself. He was a Nazirite, set apart, dedicated to the Lord. As long as he remained faithful to this vow, the strength of the Lord was with Samson. When he gave in to his carnal lusts and committed acts of unfaithfulness to this covenant, he experienced his downfall. How like Israel, God's covenant people!
3. Samson's purpose under God was "to begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines" (13:5), not to achieve Israel's complete liberation. He provided relief at a bad time, but not final deliverance.
4. Samson's carnal inclinations were not God-caused. They were "used" by God "who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines" (14:4). This may seem like a fine distinction. But we have to remember the truth of passages like James 1:14. We remember that God repeatedly used the sinful acts of men in the carrying out of his saving acts (e.g., Jews & Judas vs. Christ). We also need to remember that the ways of God are often past finding out (Isa 55:8-9; Ro 11:33-36), and that our attempts to "explain" God's acts and purposes are often imperfect, indeed!
5. Though there are obviously many parallels between the life of Samson and the life of Christ, the New Testament does not establish any clear type relationship. One may rather, by contrast, see in his self-willed headstrong use of his God-given power a counter-foil which shows the humble and perfect obedience of Christ in strongest relief (Php 2:5-8).

JUDGES 17-18

These chapters give the first of two appendices attached to Judges. They relate to situations which obviously occurred during this period of history (Israel without a king, etc.), most likely during the earlier part of this time. They offer “valuable materials for forming a correct idea of the actual character of this portion of the Israelite history”. They portray instances of extreme religious apostasy, moral degeneracy, and political chaos.

In Chapter 17 we have the background material for the next chapter, introducing the characters involved in the later incidents. We have:

Micah, a man who has stolen his mother’s money. Out of superstitious fear of her curse he returns the money.

Micah’s mother, who wants the money for a silver image and a sanctuary.

Both collaborate to set up a shrine, complete with ephod and household gods – a syncretistic type of worship.

A wandering priest from Bethlehem, looking for a place to stay. Was he like Dan unable to obtain his inheritance or dissatisfied with it? Micah installs him as house priest.

The focus of this episode shifts to the Danites in Chapter 18, whose allotted inheritance on the borders of Philistine territory was difficult to occupy. Looking for another place to settle, they send out five warriors to “explore the land.” These warrior-scouts come to the house of Micah and ask this counterfeit priest for advice. He gives them an ambiguous answer (v. 6). They travel on to Laish, far to the north of Canaan in the upper Jordan Valley, where they find a place which seems easy to occupy. This is the report they bring back (v. 9).

The Danites then proceed to go to Laish, 600 strong. On the way they stop at Micah’s house, take his idols, and persuade the priest to come along with them. The priest readily acquiesces. (Some “priest”!) Micah returns, finds his precious idol and his hired priest gone. He pursues. The Danites bully Micah into silence. He has what he deserves (v. 22-26).

Laish is then occupied by the Danites (v. 27). The city is renamed Dan (v. 29). They set up idolatrous worship under the wandering priest. No doubt it is a syncretistic type of worship – a combination of idolatrous practices and beliefs under the trappings of the worship that the people had been accustomed to.

Now comes the shocker. The author has held the name of the priest till the end to maximize the impact: Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons were priests for the tribe of Dan until the time of the captivity of the land. They continued to use the idols Micah had made, all the time the house of

God was in Shiloh.” Some scribes altered “the son of Moses” (בֶּן־מֹשֶׁה) to “the son of Manasseh”

(בֶּן־מְנַשֶּׁה) by the addition of one letter, so that Moses should not have an ignominious descendant. The NIV follows the correct original “Moses,” while the KJV has “Manasseh.”

Commentators are also disagreed as to which “captivity” is meant here. Some interpret this to be that of the 10 northern tribes by Tiglath Pileser in 2 Kings 15:29. This can hardly have been the case, since these

people certainly would not have continued to worship here under David and Solomon. The captivity referred to here undoubtedly refers to the taking of the ark by the Philistines (1 Sm 4:21-22). The exchange of a letter would yield the translation “captivity of the ark” (קַדְוֹתָאֵי אֶרֶץ־יִשְׂרָאֵל instead of קַדְוֹתָאֵי אֶרֶץ־יִשְׂרָאֵל). The book of Judges, incidentally, has more textual problems than many other Old Testament manuscripts.

The best commentary on these two chapters is found in the text itself:

“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (17:6).

“In those days Israel had no king” (18:1).

As if to say: “If Israel had had a king in those days, such extreme cases of idolatry and political disorder could not have occurred!”

JUDGES 19-21

Episode 2 of the appendix to the book of Judges portrays even more disgusting conditions at the time of the judges. Since the High Priest Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, a contemporary of Joshua, is mentioned in this episode (20:28), it must have happened shortly after Joshua’s death.

In Judges 19 the story begins on a familiar, but ominous note: “In those days Israel had no king” (v. 1).

As the plot unfolds, we find that a Levite’s unfaithful concubine has deserted him. (What a start!) The Levite goes to Bethlehem to win her back. There he is well-received by the girl’s father, much entertained, and returns with his concubine via Gibeah, a Benjamite town, where he seeks lodging for the night.

Gibeah is a New Sodom. The men of Gibeah act like the Sodomites in Genesis. To pacify their lust the concubine is given into their hands, while the Levite and his host heartlessly continue their visit (v. 23-28).

The Levite takes the body home, cuts it up in 12 pieces, and sends a piece to each tribe. By this symbolical act the crime is placed upon the conscience of the entire nation. There is general agreement that the people of Gibeah must be punished (v. 29-30).

As the story continues in Judges 20, we find that 400,000 Israelites “from Dan to Beersheba” (from Maine to Florida) respond and assemble at Mizpah, a city of Benjamin near Gibeah (v. 1-3). The Levite tells his story. The Benjamites refuse to surrender the evildoers. The battle lines are drawn: 400,000 Israelites vs. 26,000 Benjamites and 700 left-handed slingers (v. 4-17).

At first, Israel sustains heavy losses, perhaps because of overconfidence. They inquire of the Lord at Bethel (where the ark for the time being has been brought), and are told “Go.” After fierce fighting the Benjamites are defeated, losing 25,000 men. The rest flee into the wilderness (v. 18-48).

This prepares the background for what is reported in the final chapter, Judges 21. The Benjamites are in danger of extinction because of the great loss of people. The other tribes have vowed not to give their daughters to the Benjamites. What to do? (v. 1-7).

Since Jabesh-Gilead failed to send representatives to Mizpah to help the cause of Israel, Israel now marches against this city, destroys it, and carries away 400 virgins for the 600 Benjamites who had fled to the hills (v. 8-15).

Moreover, additional virgins are seized at Shiloh, while the girls are dancing there at a religious festival. The argument is that since the women are “taken,” not “given,” the oath is not broken. Keeping the letter of an oath trumps morality! Besides, it’s all for a good cause! Thus the tribe of Benjamin was rebuilt (v. 16-23).

Significantly, Judges closes with the oft-repeated refrain: “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit” (21:25).

Thus the situation is vividly portrayed:

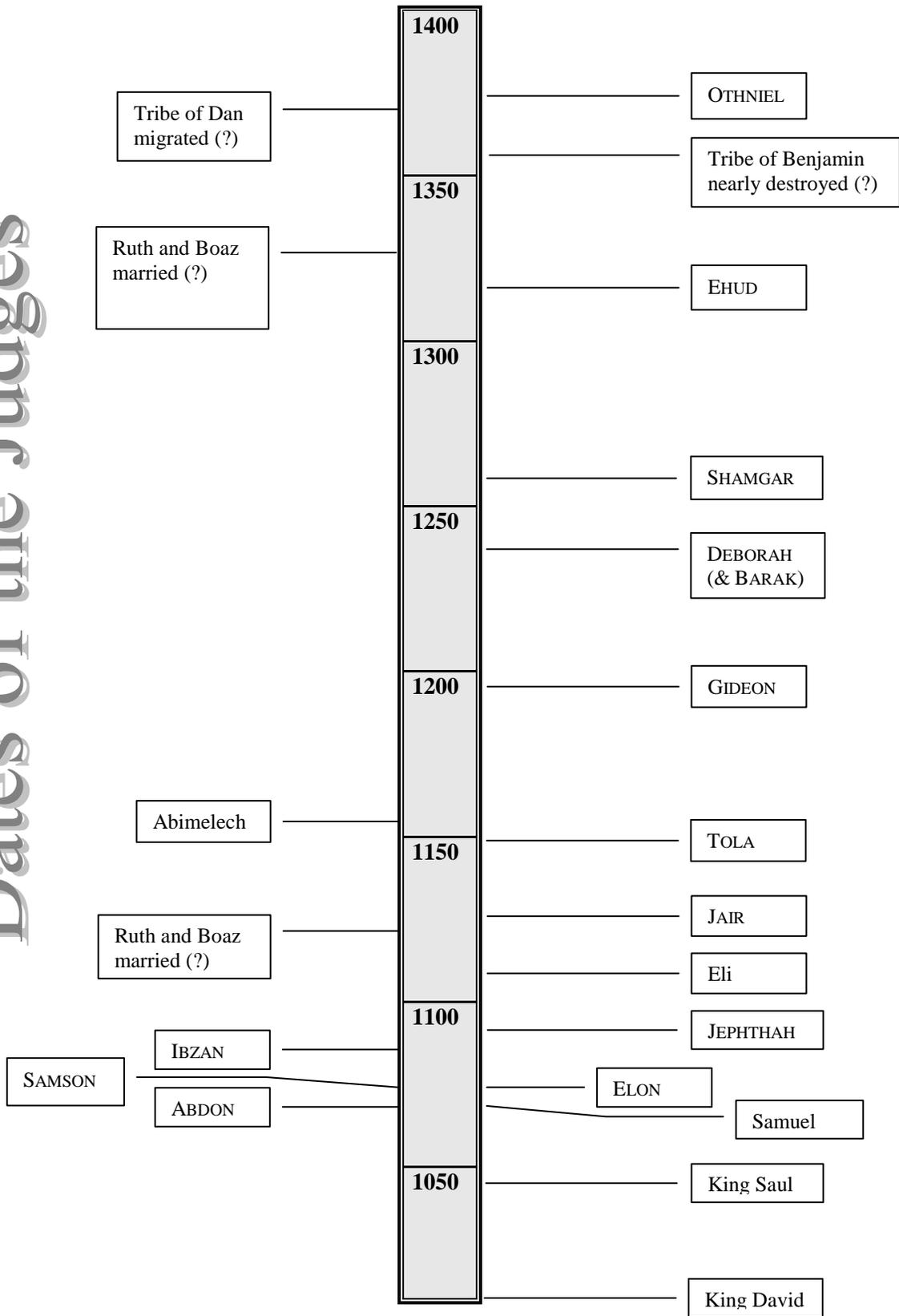
Bounds of justice are broken. Brotherly love is denied. Rape, murder, devastation are upheld so that the form of an oath might be preserved. The people are loyal to outward form. Inner moral rectitude is gone.

Surely under a king such things can’t possibly happen! Or can they?

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Jdg 13-21)

1. What “wonderful” circumstances accompanied the announcement of Samson’s birth?
2. Interpret the verse: “And the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him (Samson).”
3. What kind of woman did Samson want to marry? What problem is raised by the words “this was from the Lord” (14:4)? How would you answer this?
4. Enumerate the 6 heroic acts which happened during the first period of Samson’s life. In what positive way did these acts serve Israel?
5. Why was Samson’s loss of strength connected with his loss of hair? Was Samson’s suicidal death a heroic act? Explain.
6. Summarize the significance of Samson for Israel. What other accounts and passages in Scripture help clarify how his rash and destructive acts could still serve God’s saving purposes?
7. What word best characterizes the worship of Micah and his mother in Appendix I (Jdg 17)? Apply this to similar situations of the present day.
8. How did the Danites become involved in the Micah story? What is the purpose of this appendix (Jdg 18)?
9. Describe some of the despicable characters and sorry conditions depicted in Appendix 2 (Jdg 19-21). Which entire tribe nearly became extinct?
10. How is Israel’s sense of moral rectitude reflected in the steps taken to supply the Benjamites with marriageable daughters?
11. With which sentence does Judges close? What thoughts of the holy writer are expressed in this brief way?
12. How would you compare the situation described in the book of Judges to the situation in so-called “Christian” America today?

Dates of the Judges



CHAPTER THIRTY-SIXb)

RUTH (Ru 1-4)

By the numbering of this chapter we place Ruth as a third appendix to the book of Judges. Like the previous two it involves characters from Bethlehem, David's city. But what a difference.

We may connect the book of Ruth (רות) with Judges (as the LXX does) because of its close association with that time in Israel's history. The first verse reads: "In the days when the judges ruled ..." The last word of Ruth is "David," the book closing with a genealogy pointing to Israel's great king. Keil supposes that the book comes out of the times prior to Gideon, and that the famine mentioned in v. 1 was caused by the invading, ravaging Midianites. As the book's story comes out of that time of the judges, it is reassuring to know that all was not war, strife, and godlessness!

We recall briefly the division of the Hebrew Codex into the Torah (*Pentateuch*), the Prophets (Former and Latter), and the Writings (*Hagiographa*).

The Writings, in turn, were divided into Poetry and Wisdom books, the Rolls (*Megilloth*, מגילות), and the Historical books.

Ruth was placed among the five Rolls (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther), books used in the synagogues liturgically and read at the feasts of the Jews. Ruth was read at the Feast of Pentecost (Grain Harvest – compare 1:22).

AUTHOR

Again the author of this book is unknown. The Talmud ascribes its authorship to Samuel. Archer is of the opinion that it must have been written at the same time as Judges. Harrison favors a later period because customs are rather carefully explained, customs which people at the time of the judges would have been acquainted with (Ruth 4:1-12). Some critics, such as Wellhausen, point to the use of alleged Aramaisms as proof for a much later date of authorship. Albright suggests as late as 500 to 400 BC. The Aramaisms in Ruth, however, are few if any. The "Aramisms" may simply be more colloquial Hebrew, words from the West Semitic stock not used as frequently in other books.

Keil states that the book was undoubtedly written at the time of the early monarchy since the genealogy of David indicates that King David was a well-known person at the time when Ruth was written. We are inclined to agree with this opinion as a reasonable assumption, though this genealogy may have been added as an appendix to a family story composed earlier.

Young comments: "The very fact that Ruth, the ancestress of David, was a Moabitess, is in itself an argument for the historicity of the book" (*Introduction*, p. 340).

PURPOSE

The book of Ruth has several well-defined purposes:

1. Messianic – To show how King David, the Savior's ancestor, came from a Moabitess (Ru 4:17-23; Mt 1:5). God arranges apparently insignificant details in the interests of his marvelous plan of

salvation.

In this connection the picture of kinsman-redeemer (כֹּהֵן), which occurs as an important item in the book's story, serves as a Messianic type: a blood relative, able to pay the price of redemption, willing to buy back a forfeited inheritance. Boaz was such a kinsman-redeemer (cf. Ruth 2:20 and Job 19:25).

2. Missiological – To foreshadow the enlarged blessings to come to the Gentiles. Already in Old Testament times salvation was not intended only for the Jews!
3. Devotional – Ruth gives us an outstanding example of filial devotion, and Boaz is a person who has a respect for obligations and a deep sense of responsibility, motivated by God-inspired love. God has his faithful in Israel, even at the time of the judges. Ruth's words to her mother-in-law have often been used as an illustration of self-sacrificing love and compared to that love which should exist between husband and wife in marriage, a love which is centered in a unity of faith (Ruth 1:16-17).

Ruth is a sort of antidote to the book of Judges.

OUTLINE

The STORY OF RUTH divides itself well according to chapters:

1. Ruth comes to Bethlehem.
2. Ruth meets Boaz.
3. Ruth appeals to Boaz for help.
4. Ruth and Boaz are married, and become part of David's ancestral line.

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RUTH 1

v. 1-5 The names of the introductory characters are interesting: Elimelech: "God is king", Naomi: "Gracious", Mahlon: "weakly"; Chilion: "pining"; Ruth: "rose." Some critics have suggested that these meaningful names indicate this story is similar to a fairy-tale or allegory, a sort of pious fiction. But the genealogies recorded in Mt 1:5 and Lk 3:32, compared with Ruth 4:16-21, establish this book to be historical, a part of God's inspired record.

Note that marriage to Moabites was not forbidden, as it was in the case of Canaanites (Dt 7:3). The prohibition of entering the sanctuary in Deuteronomy 23:3 apparently referred to the time it took for an Edomite male to become naturalized as an Israelite. (This became relevant in the case of King Herod.)

v. 11 "Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands?" Naomi's words refer to the opportunity for a levirate marriage (Dt 25:5), which in her case was no longer possible.

v. 16-17 Ruth's words show not only a deep affection for her mother-in-law, but also love for the God of Israel, whom she had learned to know and believe in through her marriage to Mahlon. "Your God — my God." These are the words that ought to be stressed if this is used as a wedding text. Unity of faith completes the bond as nothing else does. Ruth did not want to leave the God she had learned to know and love. Therefore also: "Your people my people."

In our day too marriage is often the occasion that God may use to bring a person in contact with the gospel.

RUTH 2

v. 1 Introduces Boaz as a relative of Elimelech and a “man of standing.” This is important for what is to follow.

v. 8-10 These verses show the kindness of Boaz and the humility of Ruth.

v. 20 Naomi: “That man (Boaz) is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers” (לִגְאֹל – Lv 25:25, 47-49).

NOTE:

1. The GOEL principle referred primarily to redemption of property. Yahweh was the owner of the land. A family held it by virtue of assignment. God wanted the land to remain in the family. If because of poverty a family was obliged to give up (“sell”) its property rights, it was the duty of the nearest relative, if possible, to “redeem” this property and keep it within the family (Lv 25:10, 13-16, 24-28).

Roehrs on GOEL: “Redemption of a family name and property provided social stability in the covenant nation through which God promised to raise up that ‘kinsman’ of all mankind, who was to ‘redeem Israel from all his iniquities’, who in the fullness of time did bring ‘redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespass’, to all who were under ‘the curse of the law.’” (Ps 130:8; Ga 3:13; Eph 1:7; He 2:14f; 1 Pe 1:18)

2. The LEVIRATE principle related to marriage. If a man died without heir, it was the duty of the deceased man’s brother to take his wife and raise up an heir. The son of such a marriage became the legal heir of the landed property of his deceased uncle (Dt 25:5-10). (Levir – brother of a deceased husband who assumes the duties of raising up an heir.)
3. The two principles or laws are not directly connected in Scripture, but one can see their close relationship. Property and marriage went hand in hand to establish land-succession rights. We see the close relationship of the two as the story of Ruth and Boaz unfolds, and as the Goel-levirate principles are carried out with this relationship in mind.
4. The levirate principle applies only to unmarried brothers. Boaz’s interpretation of this principle, linking it with the goel principle, goes beyond the requirements of Scripture, but it may reflect developing tradition. The other relative makes no objection.

The unclarity of the situation is increased by a textual question in 4:5. According to the NIV main reading, which is the Qere and supported by the versions, Boaz tells the relative, “In the day you buy the land, you acquire Ruth as a wife.” An alternative rendering, the Kethiv, is “In the day you buy the land, I acquire Ruth as a wife.” In the first rendering Boaz is pressuring the relative with the prospect of marrying Ruth and dividing his inheritance. In the second rendering, Boaz is warning the man that if he redeems the land, Boaz will still marry Ruth, and their son will end up inheriting that land. The Kethiv is the harder reading and has much to commend it. It does not force a joining of the goel and levirate principles for which there is no biblical evidence.

In the Concordia Commentary it is suggested that Boaz was already married, and Ruth would become a second wife. Nothing in the text supports this notion other than Boaz's age.

RUTH 3

v. 2-5 The plan suggested by Naomi was for Ruth to call herself to Boaz's attention and thereby to offer an indirect proposal of marriage. There was nothing impure about it, but it was a potential source of offense.

v. 9 Ruth's proposal was on the basis of the law of kinsman-redeemer.

v. 14 Note the concern of Boaz for Ruth's reputation. He, not being the closest kinsman, wanted this matter to be settled before any further involvement on the part of either himself or of Ruth.

RUTH 4

v. 3 "Naomi is selling the piece of land ..." The "selling" was actually a "leasing" transaction, whereby the "buyer" could use the land until the year of jubilee, when the land reverted to the original owner. The "kinsman-redeemer" had the obligation to purchase this land, to keep it in the family, and according to Boaz's interpretation at the same time to marry the widow of his relative.

v. 6 The "next of kin" in this case could not see any advantage for himself in this proposed transaction, since a son which could result of a marriage by himself with Ruth would inherit this property, or a son of Boaz and Ruth would get the property. His estate would be harmed in either case.

v. 7 The sandal symbolized possession (Dt 25:9; Ps 60:8).

v. 18 This, then, is a ten-generation summary of the family line (toledoth: "account") of Perez (cf. Gn 38:29; Nu 26:20; Mt 1:5; Lk 3:31-33). Boaz is in the seventh position. The "toledoth" leads to the Messiah!

The time from Salmon to David was about 400 years so it appears that there are omissions from the genealogy. It appears that the omission is likely after Obed.

Edersheim on Ruth:

"The story which began in poverty, famine, and exile leads up to the throne of David. Undoubtedly this was the main object for which it was recorded: to give the history of David's family; and with the genealogy, traced not in every link but in (symbolical) outline, the Book of Ruth appropriately closes. It is the only instance in which the book is devoted to the domestic history of a woman, and that woman a stranger in Israel. But that woman was the Mary of the Old Testament."

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Ru 1-4)

1. Where was the book of Ruth placed in the Hebrew codex? How was it used liturgically?
2. Why has the book of Ruth been called the third appendix to Judges? How does it contrast with the others?
3. Which period in the time of the judges fits best as the setting of Ruth?

4. What evidences are there of the time of the book's writing?
5. What is the book's purpose?
6. Explain the two Old Testament principles which are fulfilled by Boaz in his marriage to Ruth.
7. How does the toledoth of Perez connect Judah with Jesus?

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

FIRST SAMUEL (1 Sa 1-7)

In the Hebrew Bible there were four Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) and only one Book of Samuel. The Septuagint divided the one book of Samuel into two. Together with 1 and 2 Kings they were designated four Books of Kingdoms. The Vulgate changed this title to the four Books of Kings. Actually this is a good designation, since what we now call the two Books of Samuel deal chiefly with Israel under kings Saul and David. Only the first half of 1 Samuel involves the judgeship of Samuel, and he dies in 1 Samuel 25.

The present division of First and Second Samuel, First and Second Kings goes back to the early 16th Century, when it was introduced by David Bomberg's printed Hebrew Bible (Venice, 1516-1517).

SETTING OF THE BOOK

There are three main characters in the books, Samuel, Saul, and David. The events of 1 and 2 Samuel take place from about 1090-970 BC.

SAMUEL

The man Samuel, from whom the two books derive their name, was God's chosen instrument during the time of the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. He lived in the period of transition from the period of the judges into that of the kings. His life and ministry occurred in the latter days of Samson, Elon, and Abdon and continued on into most of the reign of Saul, Israel's first king.

Samuel lists himself among other judges of Israel (1 Sa 12:11). The book also refers to him as one who traveled about to various places as he "judged Israel" (1 Sa 7:15-16). But Samuel was more than a judge in the ordinary sense. "All Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the LORD" (1 Sa 3:20). He established the schools of the prophets. Moreover, under God's direction he introduced the monarchy in Israel.

After the fall of the house of Eli Samuel also functioned as a priest (1 Sa 7:9). Thus we have a man who served the LORD as judge, prophet, and priest. As with Moses all three typical Messianic offices were focused on one man. He also was God's instrument at the time when Israel's government changed from theocracy, God's rule through judges he chose on an ad hoc basis, to a monarchial form of government. Samuel was not so much an originator as he was a reformer. The LORD used Samuel to restore what he had revealed to Moses. In some ways he was to Moses what Luther was to Paul.

AUTHORSHIP

The unity of the books of Samuel (language, style, treatment) indicates one author. He probably lived

after the division of the kingdom. In 1 Sa 27:6, for example, Judah is referred to as a separate kingdom. Other passages indicate a “divided kingdom” concept (cf. 1 Sa 11:8; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Sa 3:10). This division may have been in Israel’s thinking at an earlier time, of course, but some passages seem to refer to it as an accomplished fact.

The view of the Talmud is that Samuel is the author of the first part, and Nathan and Gad of the remainder. It is possible that chronicles of all of these men were used as source material, as well as the Book of Jasher (2 Sa 1:18).

TEXT

Unfortunately the original manuscripts of 1 and 2 Samuel were more poorly preserved than most other Old Testament books. This has resulted in frequent “differences” between the LXX and the MT as well as obscure references in a number of places. These differences, however, relate to minor points.

PURPOSE

The overall purpose of both books of Samuel is to relate:

THE TRANSITION OF ISRAEL’S RULE FROM THEOCRACY TO MONARCHY

This statement also serves as our theme, covering the period of Israel’s history from the birth of Samuel to the death of David.

In fact, the division of these books follows the story of its principal characters:

- I. Samuel: 1 Samuel Chapters 1-12;
 - A. Samuel’s career as judge and prophet (1-7)
 - B. Samuel prepares Israel for kingship (8-12)
 - II. Saul: 1 Samuel Chapters 13-31;
 - A. Saul’s career as king (13-15)
 - B. Saul’s rejection and his struggle with David (16-31)
 - III. David: 2 Samuel Chapters 1-24;
 - A. David’s rule over Judah (2 Sa Ch. 1-4);
 - B. David’s rule over all Israel (2 Sa Ch. 5-24).
 - 1. The success of David’s reign (5-8)
 - 2. David’s sin and troubles for his family (9-20)
- Six appendices (21-24)

FEATURES OF THE BOOK

1. This is prophetic history! Important historical battles are referred to briefly, while personal incidents are described in detail. The author at times groups together events to serve a prophetic purpose. The events of Samuel are not always recorded in chronological order.
2. A new name for God, Yahweh Sabaoth (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת), “LORD of armies,” translated “LORD of Hosts” in the KJV and “LORD Almighty” in the NIV, is introduced by the author of Samuel (cf. 1:3, 1:11, etc.). This designation is not found in the Pentateuch, Joshua, or Judges. (We would prefer it if the NIV had retained “LORD of Hosts” or used “LORD of Armies” as the translation, distinguishing this name from El Shaddai, which is more correctly translated as “God Almighty.” The NIV,

however, is following a Septuagint practice which is echoed in the New Testament.)

This new designation for God is in keeping with the era when Israel received a visible representative of its God-King in the person of an earthly monarch. The God of Israel became the “God of heavenly hosts,” manifesting himself as such to the nations and kingdoms of this world, especially under David and Solomon. Yahweh was still the “LORD of Armies,” also while Israel was under an earthly king.

3. In the books of Samuel we see a significant correlation between the three important Old Testament offices: prophet, priest, and king. All of them foreshadowed the threefold office of Christ.
 - a. Samuel was not only himself a prophet, but was called by God to revive the religious life of Israel by establishing the association of the prophetic schools. This institution continued after his death.
 - b. Under David a central place of worship with the full service of the priesthood was reestablished on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem.
 - c. Under both Samuel and David we see the development and the organization of the kingly office in Israel.
4. The books of Samuel contain one of the outstanding Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament: 2 Samuel 7:12ff. This prophecy points out that the Messiah would come from the royal house and lineage of David, and that he would establish an everlasting kingdom.

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1 SAMUEL 1

v. 1 “Ramathaim (twin heights) is the Hebrew dual form for Ramah (height). Ramah was the birthplace (1:19), the residence (7:17), and the burial place of Samuel (25:1). It is usually located at Nebi Samwil five miles northwest of Jerusalem or at Ramallah few miles to the east. This Ramah was in the tribal territory of Benjamin. Most think that Ramathaim and Ramah are the same place. Others believe Ramathaim is a different place, farther north in Ephraim.

“Elkanah” is here called an Ephraimite, because he resided there or his origin was there. He was a Levite (1 Chr 6:27 and 36). Levites dwelt among the other tribes in specified cities.

v. 2 “two wives” — bigamy was tolerated by the law (Dt 21:15-17), and in this case the fact that Hannah was childless may have had something to do with the second marriage.

v. 3 “LORD Almighty” — יהוה צבאות — from צָבָא : “serve” especially in the military.

As mentioned in our introductory notes, the translation “LORD of Hosts” (KJV) or “LORD of Armies” is preferable to “LORD Almighty” (NIV). The term was “introduced at this time when the LORD begins to form his people Israel into a kingdom by which all other kingdoms are to be overcome” — (KD). The term is used for Yahweh, the God of the universe, who governs all the powers of heaven (cf. Gn 2:1; 32:2; Jos 5:15).

v. 11 Hannah’s vow for her son was twofold: 1. membership among the Nazirites (Nu 6:2-6); 2. lifelong service of the LORD.

v. 20 “Samuel” — formed from שְׁמוּאֵל, “heard of God.”

v. 24 The time of weaning in those years was three years. Samuel was an exceptional case of presentation to the LORD for special service at a very early age.

1 SAMUEL 2

v. 1-10 Hannah’s song of praise is of prophetic and Messianic character, very similar to Mary’s Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55). Verse 8 is identical with Ps 113:7-8. Its last two lines are the first reference in the Old Testament to the king as the LORD’s anointed (Christ). This is a prophetic glance at the consummation of the kingdom of God in Messiah’s reign (v. 10) and serves as a theological introduction to the Book of Kingdoms.

v. 11-17 According to Dt 18:3 and Lv 7:31-34 the priests were allowed a share of certain offerings. The sons of Eli, however, took more than their allotted share, took this before the proper time, and took it by force. Thus they profaned the offerings and offended the worshippers.

v. 18 Samuel’s linen ephod was a vest-like or apron-like garment, resembling the dress of the high priests, but of simple white cloth

v. 19 מְעִיל — “A little robe” — a loose robe worn as an outer garment.

v. 22-25 Eli’s words of rebuke to his sons were nothing but mild truisms. They were not backed by action.

v. 27-36 The LORD sends a prophet, a “man of God” (אִישׁ-אֱלֹהִים) to declare judgment upon the house of Eli (see Jdg 13:6).

- Eli was descended from Ithamar, the younger son of Aaron (1 Chr 24:3), and was the forefather of Ahimelech. (The circumstances which led to the transfer of the office of High Priest from Eleazar’s to Ithamar’s line are not known.)
- It was Ahimelech who gave David the showbread at Nob, resulting in Ahimelech’s death at the hand of Saul (1 Sa 22:20).
- Both Zadok (a descendant of Eleazar) and Abiathar (a descendant of Ithamar) served as priests under David (2 Sa 8:17 and 20:25).
- Solomon reestablished Eleazar’s line, establishing Zadok as the single High Priest (1 Kgs 2:27).

Thus the prophecy of this man of God was fulfilled.

1 SAMUEL 3

v. 1 According to Josephus Samuel was 12 years old at this time. The priesthood was corrupt, and there was no recognized prophet whom the people could consult.

v. 7 Prior to this time Samuel did not “know the LORD” in the sense of having received a personal revelation, as in this case.

v. 9 “Speak LORD, for your servant is listening.” Words used as a text at occasions which have to do with placing emphasis on obedience to God’s Word.

v. 15 At this time the “curtains” of the tabernacle in the wilderness may have been exchanged for a more permanent type of structure where the priests lived, or a more permanent type of building may have been annexed to the tabernacle. Hence “doors.”

v. 18-21 Samuel, in telling Eli all, stands the first test of fitness for his prophetic office.

A new era now begins in Israel. All Israel (“from Dan to Beersheba”) recognized Samuel as a prophet of the LORD, and could come to Shiloh to consult with him.

1 SAMUEL 4

v. 1 The Philistines were at least in part of non-Semitic origin. A portion of them came from Caphtor (Crete or else where in the Aegean) via Cyprus. At this time they were organized in five cities: Ashdod, Ekron, Ashkelon, Gaza, and Gath. The name “Palestine” is derived from their name.

v. 2 Aphek is in the coastal plain, just below the mountains of Samaria. Eben-ezer has been tentatively identified with Izbet Sartah, just into the hills.

v. 3 The use of the ark was in this case a superstitious act. The ark, which truly symbolized the presence of the LORD, here was thought to have magical power. The Israelites failed to distinguish the symbol from the real presence of God. Their religion had degenerated to mere externalism, heathenish in character, and superstitious in nature.

v. 6 “Hebrews” — **הֵעֲבָרִים** — a designation used to refer to Israelites by foreigners or when Israelites speak to foreigners about themselves. The word may come from **עֵבֶר** “over, beyond.” It was applied to Abraham and his descendants, who came from beyond the Euphrates and were of the “sons of Eber” (Gn 10:21). Its relationship with Habiru is disputed.

v. 19-22 The wife of Phinehas, Eli’s son, bears a son in this moment of tragedy. She names the son Ichabod (**אִי־כְבוֹד**) - “Where ... the glory?”. The glory had truly departed from Israel.

This chapter marks the low point in Israel’s pre-Davidic history. The priesthood was corrupt. The armies were defeated. Even the ark of the covenant was captured by the enemy when it was used as a superstitious relic.

1 SAMUEL 5

v. 1-2 Dagon was long thought to be a god with the head and hands of a man and the body of a fish (from **דָּג** - “fish”), but texts from Syria show that Dagan is a Canaanite grain god.

v. 4-5 The Philistines did not want to defile the threshold where their god had lain prostrate.

v. 6 The Hebrew term **עֲפָלִים** means “swellings.” It may refer to tumors, hemorrhoids, or bubonic

plague. The Masoretes suggest a euphemistic reading.

v. 7-12 From Ashdod to Gath to Ekron. The longer the Philistines refused to recognize the hand of God, the more severely they experienced his punishment in the form of plagues of tumors.

1 SAMUEL 6

v. 1-9 The diviners of the Philistines counsel to send the ark back with an **אֲשָׁף**, a guilt offering of five gold tumors and five gold rats, according to the number of Philistine rulers.

By sending the ark back in a new cart with cows that had never been yoked, with their calves left behind, they cleverly put the God of Israel to the test.

v. 12 “Then the cows went straight up to Beth Shemesh.” A miracle!

v. 19 The NIV has the figure 70. The KJV has 50,070. The NIV figure is undoubtedly correct.

1 SAMUEL 7

v. 1 We have no information as to why the ark was brought from Beth Shemesh to Kiriath Jearim . Shiloh had apparently been destroyed when the ark was captured (Je 7:12,14; Je 26:6; Ps 78:60,61). The altar and perhaps elements of the tabernacle were at Gibeon during the time of David and Solomon (1 Ki 3:4). In any case, the ark remained here until David brought the ark back to Jerusalem 75 years later (2 Sa 6:2). We know of no declaration of God’s will concerning the ark during this time.

v. 2-6 Samuel’s influence made itself felt. The Israelites put away their Baals (male) and Ashtoreths (female), gods associated with fertility rites, and “drew water and poured it out before the LORD” in an act of public repentance (cf. Ps 22:14; Lm 2:19) at Mizpah, 7 miles north of Jerusalem. “Never since the days of Moses had Israel so humbled itself in an act of confession of sin” — Edersheim.

“And Samuel was ‘leader’ ...” actually “judged” in the good sense. He set right.

v. 7-11 Samuel brought the sacrifice of a lamb (**עֹלָה** - a whole burnt offering) while the Philistines were about to attack Israel at Mizpah. God himself intervened “with loud thunder.”

v. 12 “Ebenezer” (**אֶבֶן הָעֵזֶר** - “a stone of help”) — a memorial stone set up by Samuel, saying “Thus far has the LORD helped us.” A text commonly used for corner-stone laying, glorifying the LORD’s help in the undertaking, is found in this expression.

v. 14-17 Not only were the Philistines subdued during Samuel’s time, but also the Amorites, one important element of Canaanite society. Samuel’s judgeship extended through Saul’s reign and into the time of David. He was a “circuit judge,” setting up places of visitation at Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, and Ramah.

At Ramah Samuel “built an altar to the LORD,” a place for devotion and worship, no doubt occasioned by the desecrations which occurred at Shiloh under Eli and the destruction of the tabernacle at Shiloh. The LORD had not yet established a new central worship place.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (1 Sa 1-7)

1. How were the books of Samuel arranged in the original Hebrew Scriptures? Explain the process of division as this developed in the various translations and versions.
2. In which important Old Testament offices did Samuel serve? At what crucial time in Israel's history? Which judges of Israel were his contemporaries?
3. Give the basic outline of both books of Samuel. What factor determines this outline?
4. Which name of God is introduced by the writer of Samuel? Explain the emphasis of this name as it relates to the historical period of the books of Samuel.
5. Show how the threefold office of Christ is foreshadowed in the books of Samuel.
6. From which tribe in Israel was Samuel descended? What vow did his mother make? Which thoughts in Hannah's Song of Praise (ch. 2) find a similar expression elsewhere in Scripture? Explain the similarities.
7. What indicates the extent to which the high priestly functions had deteriorated under Eli? What prophetic warning did Eli receive? What would you say constituted Eli's greatest weakness?
8. How did the LORD test Samuel at an early age? How did he stand the test?
9. Identify the low point in Israel's pre-Davidic history. How was this reflected in the naming of Eli's grandson?
10. In what ways did the LORD manifest his power to the Philistines after they had captured the ark? In what miraculous way was the ark returned? To which place at first? Where was the ark brought next?
11. What remarkable reform took place under Samuel's leadership? Describe the mighty victory commemorated at Ebenezer.
12. Describe Samuel's activities as judge and as priest (1 Sa 7:15-17).

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT SAUL'S RISE AND FALL (1 Sa 8-16)

1 SAMUEL 8

When Samuel's sons failed to "walk in his ways" (v. 3), the pressure to have a king "as all the other nations" (v. 5) became strong. Previous attempts to have a king had either been declined (Gideon - Jdg 8:22), or had ended in failure (Abimelech - Jdg 9). Israel's God-given constitution (Dt 17:14) anticipated rule by a king when the people attained a state of readiness in the promised land and God would indicate that it was time for a king. However, even in Deuteronomy Moses foreshadowed the attitude that the people would have when asking for a king, a desire to be like other nations, indicating that kingship came about because of the dissatisfaction of the people when God attempted to establish a pure theocracy.

This state, however, had not yet come. Israel's desire for a king at this time was poorly motivated. Instead of seeking the cause of various misfortunes within themselves, the people blamed God's providential care. They imagined that an outward change of government would solve matters and secure their prosperity.

While they had judges, Israel was dependent on the LORD to raise up a judge with the gifts to meet the need. The office was not hereditary. A hereditary kingship would remove direct dependence on God's providence. Thus their desire for a king was a rejection of the LORD's care over them and brought on by a failure to recognize their own faults (see especially v. 20).

Although the people were moved by self-willed obstinacy, the LORD directed Samuel to choose a king, yet at the same time expressing his displeasure (v. 6-9).

Samuel then by God's direction presents a picture of the kind of servitude Israel might expect under a king's rule (court retainers, charioteers, military service, increased tax payments, etc.). His words turned out to be prophetic!

1 SAMUEL 9

v. 1-2 This chapter introduces Saul (שָׂאֹל - "asked for"), "an impressive young man" (although old enough to have a grown son Jonathan!), "a head taller" than others, of the tribe of Benjamin and from a family "of standing."

v. 3-18 In his search for his father's donkeys Saul comes to the place where Samuel in his official capacity of "seer" (הַרְאָה, the archaic designation for "prophet," נְבִיא) is offering a sacrifice. Edersheim and Keil argue at length whether the place was Ramah or not. The answer is of little consequence.

God had let Samuel know in advance of Saul's coming, instructing him to anoint Saul leader over Israel.

v. 19-27 In telling Saul not to worry about the donkeys, Samuel gives Saul a strong hint as to his future ("all the desire of Israel") without revealing what will happen. Following a meal at which Saul is an honored guest, the two men have a long conversation, in which Samuel promises Saul "a message from God."

Note: Saul with his physical attractiveness was surely “a king after the heart of Israel.” He embodied all the outward qualities Israel desired. He also represented Israel’s failings by his inner weaknesses. “The history of Saul is a summary and reflection of that of Israel” — Edersheim.

At the beginning Saul demonstrated a zeal for pious rule. He offered sacrifices before going into battle. He opposed the sin of eating flesh with blood. He banished witches and wizards. He had a “form of godliness.”

Yet in these same circumstances he also sinned. He offered sacrifices himself, depending on his own power. He recklessly pronounced a ban on eating before battle and then found himself unable to carry this out. He violated God’s express will by failing to execute the ban on the Amalekites. He consulted a witch to determine his future. He lacked true devotion to the LORD.

Prophetically, his successes in battle are briefly described. Through his rejection Israel had to learn that royalty in itself was not enough to gain deliverance, and that success in battle was less important than submission to God’s will.

God was still ruler, also in a monarchy!

1 SAMUEL 10

v. 1 Anointing with oil was symbolic of the Spirit of God’s endorsement. This is the first instance in the Old Testament of anyone besides priests being anointed.

v. 2-7 To confirm the consecration of Saul as king three signs were given:

1. Meeting two men who announce the return of the donkeys.
2. Meeting three men with kids, bread, and wine.
3. Meeting a company of prophets at Gibeah.

God’s truthfulness in the little things confirms his truthfulness in the big things.

v. 8 “Go down ahead of me to Gilgal.” Samuel here instructs Saul on the procedure to be followed for the sacrifices, namely, to wait for him before offering sacrifices. This is the principle Saul impatiently did not obey later on (ch. 13).

v. 9 God gives Saul a “new heart,” i.e., the courage to serve as king.

v. 10-13 “A procession of prophets ...” This is the first mention of a prophetic guild in the Old Testament. Saul joins them in prophesying, whence the saying: “Is Saul also among the prophets?” This became a proverb for expressing astonishment whenever someone did something not according to his previous occupation.

v. 17-27 Samuel now assembles the people at Mizpah for the choosing of a king. This act by no means contradicts the significance of Saul’s prior anointing.

The Mizpah gathering is for Saul’s public recognition. In order to find Saul, as he was hiding among the baggage, the people inquire further of the LORD (וַיִּשְׁאַלְוּ עוֹד בַּיהוָה) - the expression for using the

Urim and Thummim according to Nu 27:21). The people cry יְחִי הַמֶּלֶךְ - “Long live the king!”

v. 25 Samuel writes down the regulations for theocratic monarchy upon a scroll. Perhaps they echoed the regulations in Deuteronomy 17. Apparently few kings followed them.

1 SAMUEL 11

In this chapter we hear that Jabesh Gilead (East of Jordan) is once more besieged by the Ammonites, who were previously defeated by Jephthah. Messengers are sent to Gibeah. Although chosen as king, Saul is still working in the fields, preferring to remain at his usual occupation until an opportunity comes to prove himself. This time has now arrived!

In characteristic fashion (twelve pieces of oxen sent throughout Israel) Saul calls for support for himself and Samuel (v. 7), apparently serving jointly. In the fear of the LORD (פֶּחַד־יְהוָה) - not “terror” as in NIV) 300,000 from Israel and 30,000 from Judah (note division!) respond, and a great victory follows (v. 11). Saul’s first military act followed the pattern of the judges in rescuing Israel from oppression. Under the kings this pattern changed.

Samuel then calls the people to Gilgal to confirm Saul’s kingship.

A happy chapter!

Note that the Dead Sea Scrolls has a large addition to the beginning of the chapter that provides more of the setting for the story. This addition is treated in *Bible Review (BR)* Volume 1-3.

1 SAMUEL 12

This chapter brings Samuel’s farewell address as judge (he will continue as prophet), possibly delivered at Gilgal when the monarchy was confirmed.

Samuel testifies to his own integrity (v. 1-5), reviews Israel’s history by declaring the righteous acts of God (v. 6-11), and admonishes Israel to fear the LORD and serve him only (v. 15).

There is a textual problem concerning the identity of the judge in v. 11. The MT’s Bedan (בִּדְאָן) is unknown. Perhaps it is a misreading for Barak (בָּרַק) or Abadon (עֲבָדוֹן)

He then calls for a sign from the LORD — a thunderstorm during the dry harvest season (v. 16-18).

Note v. 22: “For the sake of his great name the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own.”

A text to inspire confidence when embarking on a new phase of activity.

The entire chapter is useful for the celebration of a church anniversary:

1. Commemoration (v. 1-12);
2. Celebration (v. 13-22);
3. Commitment (v. 23-25).

With this chapter the first part of the book, which has had Samuel as its chief character, closes. We now direct our attention primarily to Saul.

1 SAMUEL 13

v. 1 This verse presents a manuscript problem, resulting in the following translations and interpretations:

בֶּן־שָׁנָה שָׂאוּל בְּמַלְכוֹ וּשְׁתֵּי שָׁנִים מָלַךְ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Literal: The son of a year was Saul in his rule, and two years he reigned over Israel.

KJV: "Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel ..."

NIV: "Saul was thirty years old when he became king and he reigned over Israel forty-two years."

NEB: "Saul was fifty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel for twenty-two years."

Luther agrees with the KJV.

Kretzmann supplies the numbers "40 years old" and "22 years over Israel."

TEV: Omits this verse entirely.

It seems that the decade numbers have been lost. Translators supply them by reconstruction. Acts 13:21 refers to a 40-year reign. Josephus refers to both 20 and 40 years.

Verse 5 presents another textual problem with the number of chariots.

v. 1-7 Saul is at Micmash with 2,000 men. Jonathan is at Gibeah with 1,000 men. Jonathan suddenly attacks the Philistines at Geba, between the two Israelite camps. Apparently this attack of Jonathan begins the conflict with the Philistines which Saul and Samuel had spoken about in chapter 10, but which Saul seems reluctant to start. Saul's retreat to Gilgal seems to put him at a huge disadvantage since it takes him out of the highlands. But it was what Samuel had instructed him to do. From this unlikely place, after Samuel had sacrificed, the LORD would begin his deliverance of Israel from the Philistines. The battle would be the LORD's. As the Philistines now gather huge forces at Micmash, a frightened Israel hides and some even flee across Jordan.

v. 8-14 Instead of waiting for Samuel to come, Saul offers sacrifices himself, thereby disobeying Samuel's instructions. When Samuel comes soon after, he pronounces judgment upon the disobedient king, stating that his kingdom will not endure, and that the LORD will choose another leader "after his own heart."

Saul's kingdom is not immediately taken away, but it is now clear that the royal line is taken away from his family.

v. 17-23 Saul is left with 600 men. The Philistines despoil the land, inflicting so much damage that Israel is left without so much as blacksmiths to forge weapons and tools. The Philistines impose an arms embargo on Israel, but the text provides no evidence for a Philistine monopoly on iron.

This chapter can be entitled “ill-omened beginnings,” and is followed by the next chapter “uncertain successes.”

There are a number of geographical difficulties in this chapter. It is not agreed if Gibeah and Geba are two places or one. In some verses scribes became confused over which name was correct. Gibeah is also called Gibeah of Saul and Gibeah of Benjamin to distinguish it from other Gibeahs in Israel. Both names mean “Hill City.” Geba seems to be a distinct place between Gibeah and Micmash.

1 SAMUEL 14

Saul is now at Gibeah. Without informing his father, Jonathan attacks a Philistine detachment at Micmash. It is Jonathan’s intention to cross a deep wadi between the hills Bozez and Seneh. Using a brave tactic Jonathan succeeds, killing twenty Philistines in the process (v. 14).

A panic ensues among the Philistines, helped by an earthquake sent by God (v. 15).

Saul inquires of Ahijah, a descendant of Eli wearing the ephod with the Urim and Thummim, what to do. (Note v. 18: “Bring the ephod” — not the ark of God. The LXX has “ephod,” the MT has “ark.”) A great victory follows in spite of Saul’s indecision, because “the LORD rescued Israel that day” (v. 23).

In a moment of false zeal Saul gives the ill-advised command under oath that no soldier is to eat anything before the battle is finished (v. 24). Jonathan does not know of this and eats honey to regain strength (v. 27). The hungry soldiers, having gone all day without food, devour plundered meat together with the blood (v. 27 - contra Lv 19:26).

Saul offers sacrifices and asks God how to carry on the fight. Not receiving an answer, he senses something is wrong. Lots are cast, and Jonathan is found to be the one who disobeyed the command (v. 42). According to his oath Saul is bound to execute his son. The soldiers intercede, and Saul is forced to spare Jonathan.

Saul’s victories are summarized at the close of the chapter (v. 47-48). In v. 49 his family is listed, though usually this chronicled when a man’s rule is at an end. For all practical purposes this is the case. (For a similar situation see the official ending of Samson’s judgeship at the end of Judges 15 instead of 16.) (In the listing of Saul’s family Ishvi is likely Abinidab. Ishbosheth is not mentioned — compare 1 Sa 31:2; 1 Chr 8:33).

Although Saul at this point is still enjoying a measure of success, his sense of judgment is faulty. He is indecisive and commits rash acts to demonstrate his authority—a perfect picture of a man losing his grip and committing acts of folly to cover up.

Even Jonathan has to say: “My father has made trouble for the country.”

In the prophetic sense Saul has ceased to be king. The next chapter brings his final rejection.

1 SAMUEL 15

v. 1-3 The Amalekites, descendants, at least in part, of Esau, were Israel’s oldest enemy. They had been the first to attack Israel in the wilderness (Ex 17:8ff). God had pronounced the ban (בְּחֵרֶם) upon them (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). Now the time had come to execute this ban. It was a test of Saul’s moral qualification to act as king. Although the hereditary line had been removed from his house, the test

applied to Saul himself.

v. 6 The Kenites, descendants of Jethro who had served as guides in the wilderness wanderings, are spared.

v. 7-21 The details of Israel's victory are not given. Failure to execute the ban is emphasized.

Saul's behavior is reprehensible in various ways. Not only does he fail to carry out the LORD's command. He proceeds to erect a large monument in his own honor. He lies to Samuel about the sacrifice, blaming the soldiers, then shifts to the need for sacrifice. When faced with Samuel's direct accusation, he still tries to profess innocence. Surely he must have known that what was banned could not be sacrificed!

v. 22 "To obey is better than sacrifice." This principle embodied in this statement is still true.

v. 23 Saul's rejection is clearly stated to him by Samuel.

v. 24-48 Although Saul says: "I have sinned," his "repentance" is weak in the light of v. 30, where he shows that he is more concerned about receiving the honor of the elders than the honor of God. Symbolically, as Samuel turns away, Saul's reaching out and tearing Samuel's garment is in Samuel's words a picture of how the LORD has torn the kingdom from him.

v. 29 "He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind." This word of Samuel is a commentary on v. 20, where the LORD says: "I am grieved." Actually the word used here is "I repent"

(**נָחַם**) The LORD's "repentance" is a change of action rather than a change of will or mind. The LORD's change of action is brought on through a change in circumstances occasioned by the people with whom he is dealing (see also v. 35: "The LORD was grieved that he had made Saul king").

1 SAMUEL 16

v. 1-12 The LORD instructs Samuel to anoint David as Saul's successor. Samuel goes, ostensibly to sacrifice and judge, in order to ward off suspicion from a jealous Saul.

The story of the anointing of Jesse's youngest son is well known, especially v. 7: "Man looks at the outward appearance, the LORD looks at the heart."

v. 13-14 "The Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power." David must have been aware of his high calling, even at this time.

"Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him." Note: "from the LORD." This is the LORD's judgment upon a man who had hardened his heart. His affliction took the form of a deep melancholy, and even at times madness.

The Hebrew is **רוּחַ יְהוָה מֵאַתְּ יְהוָה**, not **רוּחַ יְהוָה**: not the Spirit of Yahweh, but "a spirit from Yahweh."

Saul's final rejection was not followed by immediate deposition from the throne. The LORD still had some seasoning to do in David's case. The consequences of Saul's rejection from the LORD, however, were immediately apparent in his jealousy, melancholy, and irresponsible acts of madness.

The LORD's "repentance" recorded in ch. 15 results in his course of action described in ch. 16, where David is chosen, "a man after the LORD's heart" (v. 7).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (1 Sa 8-16)

1. What situation gave impetus to Israel's request for a king? Explain why the LORD was displeased with this request.
2. Explain the circumstances leading to Saul's choice as king by Samuel.
3. What explicit instruction (ch. 10:8) did Samuel give Saul soon after his anointing?
4. What is significant about Saul meeting a company of prophets other than the fact that it was a sign of assurance? Explain the saying: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (also ch. 19:18-19).
5. What was Saul's first military act following his being chosen as king at Mizpah?
6. Where was Saul publicly confirmed as king? Relate what happened at that occasion (ch. 12). Give both the LAW and GOSPEL elements of Samuel's farewell sermon.
7. What textual problem confronts us in 1 Sa 13:1?
8. Tell the circumstances which brought about Saul's rejection at Gilgal.
9. In what various ways does Saul show that he is losing his grip during the battle with the Philistines (ch. 14)?
10. What act of Saul led to his final rejection by God? (ch. 15). In what ways did Saul display reprehensible conduct at this same occasion?
11. Explain in context and apply the two statements:
 - a. "To obey is better than sacrifice."
 - b. "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Can you give some contemporary examples?

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE SAUL AND DAVID (1 Sa 17-31)

1 SAMUEL 17

v. 1 The scene for the story of David and Goliath is the Elah valley, 12 miles southwest of Bethlehem. Sloping hills on either side of the valley provide camp sites for the opposing armies. A stream runs between them.

v. 4-7 Goliath is 9 ft. tall, with a coat of mail weighing 150 lbs, and a spear's head weighing 18 lbs.

There are two large omissions in the Septuagint version of this story — 17:12-31 and

17:55 to 18:5. Critics see this as evidence of two different versions of the story. They also allege contradictions between the two accounts. The LXX is simply abbreviating a story with a lot of repetition as it does elsewhere.

v. 15 “David went back and forth” from Bethlehem to the camp of the Israelites. We conclude, therefore, that at the outbreak of this war David returned home from Saul's palace to tend his father's sheep, making trips of this kind to bring food to his brothers and inquire concerning their welfare. (This also explains Saul's questioning concerning David at the end of the story.)

v. 38 Inability to wear Saul's armor does not necessarily mean David was a puny child — as is sometimes pictured. Remember that Saul was a head taller than the average person.

v. 45 “I am come in the name of the LORD Almighty” — actually **יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת**, LORD of Hosts.

v. 48-51 This story is full of drama. (Nowhere has it been told better than by Evangelist Bimbi in Central Africa, to the last twitch of Goliath as Mr. Bimbi personally enacts the movements of each character!)

v. 54 The head of Goliath was sent to Jerusalem, which was in the hands of the Jebusites. Was David warning the Jebusites, “You are next”?

v. 55-58 Saul's and Abner's questions, which seek to identify David more closely, are used by the critics to show “contradictions.” Actually these questions are not surprising in view of these facts: 1. David served Saul only on occasions (cf. v. 15); 2. armor-bearers in those days were many (see 2 Sa 18:15); 3. it is perfectly understandable that after David's victory Saul's interest in him would be intensified considerably. It would be strange, indeed, if Saul had not been more than curious!

1 SAMUEL 18

The friendship of David and Jonathan — one of the most touching in all literature — has its beginnings in this chapter ... As David's success in battle continues, Saul's jealousy grows. He makes six unsuccessful attempts on David's life.

v. 10 “He (Saul) was prophesying ...” **וַיִּתְנַבֵּא** is used of ecstatic utterances of both good and bad prophets. A better translation here would be: “He was raving ...” (see NRSV and NASB)

v. 17-30 Saul's duplicity in promising his daughter Merab to David, then giving her to another, and his treachery in offering Michal for the price of 100 Philistine foreskins demonstrates his increasing state of mental and spiritual deterioration. The success of raids between these nations often depended on body counts. Collecting foreskins was one way of counting enemy bodies.

The collection of enemy foreskins was a practice of the Egyptian army. It is pictured in war memorials at Medinet Habu.

1 SAMUEL 19

The intrigues of Saul against David continue, with Jonathan and Michal on David's side. The text refers again to an "evil spirit from the LORD," sent in judgment upon Saul from Yahweh (v. 9). Michal uses one of her images (תְּרַפִּים - teraphim) to deceive her father (v. 13). Michal's lie seems to be self-serving rather than a defense of David like that of Jonathan.

In v. 18 there is an interesting reference to the prophets dwelling "in Naioth in Ramah," the place to which David flees from Saul. Samuel lived in Ramah. The word "Naioth" means "dwellings." Were these "dwellings" the common residence of the society of prophets, a sort of "Bible School" taught there by Samuel?

In v. 20 there is also a reference to "a group of prophets prophesying." Keil uses this passage to treat at some length the Schools of the Prophets (*Commentary*, p. 199-206). The origin of these schools is obscure. According to 2 Kings 4:38-43 about 100 of these prophets sat before Elisha at Gilgal. These schools were organized by Samuel, and later by Elijah and Elisha, for purposes of spiritual training. Their studies included the books of the law, the history of Israel, poetry, and music. Especially at such times when the priesthood was in a state of decay, the LORD used these means to reveal his presence and will. These schools may have lost their spiritual direction with time and became heterodox. As such they may have been the source of the heterodox prophets of Isaiah and Jeremiah's time.

In v. 24 even Saul, suddenly seized by the Spirit of God, "stripped off his robes" (see 1 Kgs 20:35) and also "prophesied." God was still in control. This event is most unusual. God uses prophesying as a curse and hindrance rather than a blessing.

1 SAMUEL 20

v. 1 "Then David fled ..." These words pretty well summarize the next eleven chapters of this book — one flight of David after the other from the jealous, murderous Saul. Much of David's time is spent in the wilderness, in rocks and caves, and even among the enemy Philistines. This time-period must have taken up ten years of David's life!

Yet these were necessary years, years of training and testing under God's hand. Only a man with David's experiences could write Psalm 27. In fact, quite a number of David's psalms stem directly out of this period (see Psalms 34, 52, 54, 56 and 59). Everyone called by God will have such days of training and testing!

These years also had a very practical purpose. David's hard core of 400-600 men were similarly trained and tested during this time. These men served him well when Absalom later tried to take the kingdom from him. Even so we, too, get to know our true mainstays in difficult times.

During this time David met and married a faithful wife, Abigail, one who could in addition to managing

his household affairs well also suppress his moods of temper. A faithful wife is an invaluable blessing for every servant of God. But David's household is undercut by his polygamy.

We note the strength of David's friendship with Jonathan during all these years, a friendship that is recognized in history and literature as a most outstanding example of self-sacrificial love and mutual respect.

v. 14-15 Did Jonathan know what was coming? His words to David in these verses indicate a strong premonition, at least, that David would succeed his father as the king of Israel.

v. 18-42 The prearranged sign (shooting of arrows etc.) was apparently carried out, but not fully. David, instead of fleeing directly, took personal leave of Jonathan because of the strong attachment between the two friends.

1 SAMUEL 21

v. 1 "David went to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest ..." The situation presented in this chapter raises a few difficulties not answered in the text. Apparently the leading priests resided here, and worship was conducted here, perhaps in what remained of the tabernacle. According to other accounts the ark, however, was in Kiriath Jearim (1 Sa 7:2), where it remained in Abinadab's house until David had it brought to Jerusalem (2 Sa 6:2). The text here is silent on the matter of the ark. The altar was at Gibeon in David's time.

Ahimelech is the son of Ahitub, a descendant of Phinehas, son of Eli, of the line of Ithamar, son of Aaron (2 Sa 8:17; 1 Chr 18:16). Saul's priest Ahijah (confer 14:3) is apparently Ahimelech's brother or Ahimelech by another name.

When Jesus refers to this incident in Mark 2:25-26, he says "in the days of Abiathar." Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech who joined David in his flight and became David's priest.

v. 4 Ahimelech, having no common bread to give David, permits the eating of consecrated bread which only priests were allowed to eat (Lv 24:5-9). In doing so, Ahimelech observed the higher law of love. When Jesus was accused of being a "Sabbath-breaker," he cites this incident as an example of the LORD desiring mercy, not sacrifice (Mt 12:3-7; Mk 2:25-26).

v. 9 David acquires the sword of Goliath, which had been kept at the tabernacle. How it got there we don't know. How foolish to take the sword of Goliath to his home town, reminding the Philistines that he was the killer of their hero.

v. 10-15 David's attempt to find refuge with Achish, the Philistine king of Gath, proves unsuccessful. He feigns madness in order to escape (Ps 56 and 34).

1 SAMUEL 22

v. 1-2 David has 400 men with him, most of whom are in distress on account of Saul.

v. 3-4 David makes provision for his family to receive protection across the Jordan, at Mizpah in Moab. We recall that David's ancestress, Ruth, was a Moabite.

v. 5 Gad is introduced as a prophet, no doubt from the school of the prophets. Gad is later referred to in 1 Chronicles 21:9 as "David's seer." He is also the prophet who announces God's punishment upon David in the final years of his reign, (2 Sa 24:1ff) and according to 1 Chronicles 29:29 the chronicler of

David's reign.

v. 6-18 Doeg (confer ch. 21:7) reports to Saul a distorted, self-serving version of how Ahimelech helped David at Nob, and Saul then orders Doeg to slay the 85 priests at Nob with their families. Though an evil act by Saul and Doeg, this is the beginning of God's judgment on the house of Eli.

v. 20 Abiathar, Ahimelech's son, escapes and remains with David as his priest.

David pours out his frustration at this time in Psalm 52.

1 SAMUEL 23

v. 1-6 David inquires of the LORD through the Urim and Thummim, which Abiathar had brought from Nob, whether he should rescue Keilah from the looting Philistines.

v. 6-14 The ungrateful people of Keilah — as David again ascertains from the Urim and Thummim — are about to surrender David into Saul's hand, so he escapes with 600 men to the wilderness of Ziph. This is a wild, uncultivated, mountainous region toward the Dead Sea. Ziph itself lies nearly 3000 feet above the sea in a region of limestone rocks and caves.

v. 16-18 Jonathan and David renew their covenant at Horesh. Jonathan is aware of David's succession to the throne. This is the last meeting of the two.

v. 19-28 The treacherous Ziphites bargain with Saul to betray David, but Saul is diverted by a report that the Philistines are raiding the land. See Psalm 54.

v. 29 David flees to En Gedi, a well-watered spot on the east edge of the desert of Judah, 600 feet above the Dead Sea, with a copious stream falling from the limestone rock.

1 SAMUEL 24

Saul pursues David to En Gedi. Here David conceals himself a large limestone cave with a narrow entrance and many side vaults. When Saul goes into the cave to "relieve himself" (v. 3) he lays his garment aside. David cuts off a piece of Saul's robe as evidence that he has had opportunity to kill him. As Saul becomes aware of this, he seems to have a change of heart. David bows before Saul and promises not to wipe out Saul's family, a promise which he honors later when he spares Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan.

1 SAMUEL 25

Samuel's death and burial are reported in v. 1.

This chapter relates the story of churlish Nabal (נָבָל - "fool") and his perceptive and capable wife Abigail. When Nabal refuses to share his food with David in return for David's protection, David threatens reprisal in sudden anger. Abigail, however intervenes, showing exceptional judgment as well as loyalty to her foolish husband. With picturesque words she counsels David (v. 29-30).

When Nabal dies of a stroke — a judgment of God — David takes Abigail as his wife. For David this is wife No. 2, since he was already married to Ahinoam. In the meantime Saul had given Michal to another man (v. 43-44). Psalm 53 may allude to this incident.

1 SAMUEL 26

This is an account of how David again spares Saul's life. Critics claim this is another version of a David-legend, arguing that the treachery of the Ziphites and the murderous intent of Saul are given a slightly different embellishment.

The facts of the story, however, differ substantially:

1. Abishai sneaks into Saul's camp (v. 7).
2. David and Abishai take a spear and a water jug as evidence (v. 11).
3. David calls to Saul from a distant hilltop, not trusting Saul to get any closer (v. 13).

David and Saul part company, never to see each other again.

1 SAMUEL 27

David despairs of being able to escape the plots of Saul in Israel and seeks refuge with Achish, Philistine king of Gath. By means of his raids on the neighboring Geshurites, Gerzites, and Amalekites David deceptively wins the confidence of Achish, who believes that David has made himself "odious" (literally "stinking") to his own people.

1 SAMUEL 28

When Achish decides to make war against Israel, David is placed in a very compromised position. When asked by Achish to go along against Israel, David gives an ambiguous answer (v. 2).

As the forces of the Philistines gather against the Israelites, Saul, moved by terror, seeks advice from the witch at Endor. Endor lies across the valley from Mt. Gilboa, the scene of the impending battle.

The appearance of Samuel (v. 14-19) has caused as many "explanations" as there are commentators:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Edersheim: | a real apparition, not caused by the devil, but allowed by God. |
| Keil: | Samuel himself, by special command of God, arisen not in glory, but "in earthly corporeality." |
| Luther: | a specter of the devil, effected by a devilish woman. "The Holy Spirit cannot do anything against himself." |
| Calvin: | a specter, not really Samuel. "Does anyone imagine that God wished his prophet to be exposed to such ignominy? As if the devil had power over the bodies and souls of the saints which are in God's keeping!" |
| Kretzmann: | this could not have been the real Samuel. Those who die in the LORD are blessed. |
| in the LORD. "One messenger." | The devil has no jurisdiction over those who have fallen asleep of Satan's own evil spirits had to serve the LORD as |
| Eerdmann: | an ecstatic, somnambulistic state of being on Saul's part. [According to the account Saul did not see anything, only the witch did.] |

Becker: See *Wizards that Peep*, p 56 f.

The text says “Samuel.” The witch herself cries out in terror at the sight of the apparition, as though shocked. Much remains a mystery, but God’s power is here exercised rather than Satan’s, and “Samuel” speaks. His words, declaring a terrible judgment from the LORD upon Saul, his sons, and the army of the Israelites, are fulfilled to the letter.

For Saul the result of his disobedience was the same, regardless of the nature of the appearance.

1 SAMUEL 29

David is “rescued” from his delicate position when the Philistines demand his return before marching against the Israelites (v. 1-7). David remonstrates, obviously putting on an act (v. 8). David returns to Ziklag in the country of the Philistines.

1 SAMUEL 30

At Ziklag David finds his place devastated by the Amalekites and his wives taken captive. David rescues his wives and defeats the Amalekites, receiving information from an Egyptian slave. David wisely shares the spoils of victory, even with those who because of exhaustion were unable to fight along.

1 SAMUEL 31

v. 1 This chapter continues the story of the battle of the Philistines against Israel, begun in the plain of Jezreel and reported in chapters 28 and 29.

v. 2 Saul’s sons, including Jonathan, are killed in battle. (It develops that Abner and Ishbosheth were either not in this battle, or escaped - 2 Sa 2).

v. 4 Saul, without a word of repentance and fearing disgrace, kills himself by falling on his sword. The people of Jabesh Gilead, whom Saul had rescued early in his reign (1 Sa 11), heroically recover the mutilated bodies of Saul and his sons, and after burning the bodies give their bones a proper burial.

“The end of the unhappy king corresponds to his life ever since the day of his rejection as king” — Keil.

In Saul’s end we see manifested the righteous judgment of God upon a man who hardened his heart.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (1 Sa 17-31)

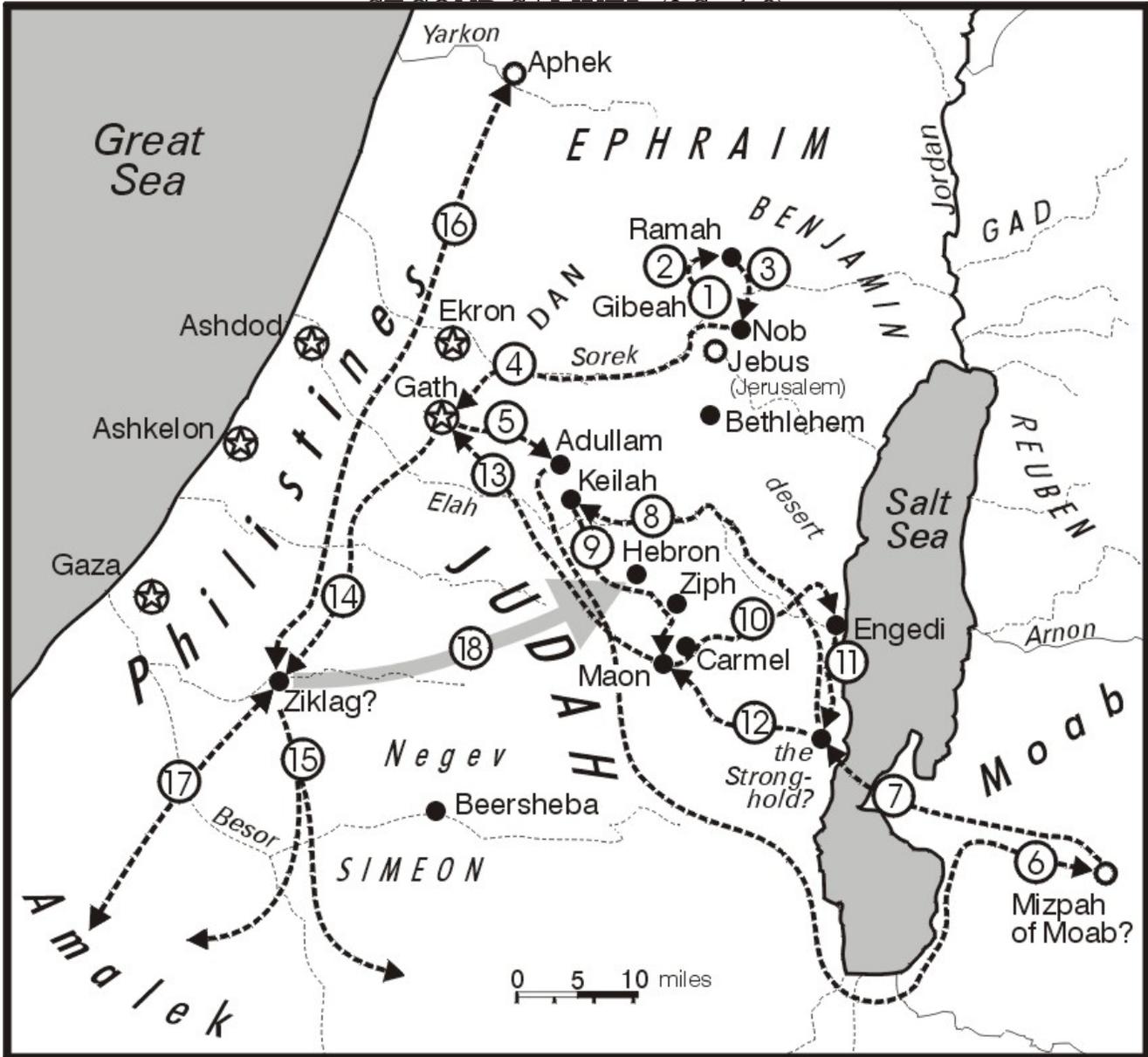
1. Which words of David in 1 Sa 17 would make an excellent sermon text? How would you apply it?
2. Is David here a type of Christ? How would you preach on this story?
3. What covenant did David and Jonathan make? What was its sign? Why is their close friendship so remarkable?
4. How is Saul’s further deterioration demonstrated in Chapter 18?
5. What did Michal use to deceive those who were seeking to kill David? What does this reveal about her?

6. Why is David's flight to Naioth (ch. 19:18-24) of special interest to Bible students?
7. In what various ways did David's many years of flight from Saul serve a good purpose?
8. What assistance did Ahimelech give David (ch. 21)? What happened to Ahimelech as a result (ch. 22)? What use does Jesus make of this incident?
9. At which two places did David spare Saul's life? What decided differences in these accounts show that these are not "two versions of the David legend" as some critics claim?
10. Identify the following people and tell what role they played in the stories of David's exile from Saul: Nabal - the Ziphites - Gad - Doeg - Abigail - Achish - Abishai
11. Where did David finally go to seek refuge from Saul? Into what difficult position did this place him? How was he rescued from this compromising position?
12. What explanation do you favor concerning the appearance of the Witch of Endor?
13. Describe Saul's final battle, his death, and the disposition of his body? What warning is contained in the tragic example of King Saul?

FOR ADDED STUDY

Trace David’s flight on the map below, recalling briefly what happened at each of the numbered places:

CHAPTER FORTY



Chronicles does not supplant 2 Samuel and Kings. It supplements them.

+++++

2 SAMUEL 1

v. 1 “After the death of Saul ...” This is a resumption of 1 Samuel. It takes us back to David, whose

defeat of the Amalekites at Ziklag must have happened about the same time that Saul was defeated by the Philistines.

v. 9 The Amalekite who brings the message of Saul's death to David was obviously fabricating a story to win a reward. He had no way of knowing that an Amalekite was the wrong thing to be at this time in view of David's recent experience with the Amalekites.

v. 12 Except for the Jabeshites the only deep mourning for Saul was by David, who had suffered most from Saul's jealousy.

v. 17-27 David's elegy, a "lament of the bow" (a song to which was given the title Keshet – "bow" – a martial ode named after one of the principal weapons of a warrior) is one of the finest in the Old Testament.

The song is arranged in three strophes, each beginning with "How the mighty have fallen!" Strophe 1: Saul and Jonathan; Strophe 2: Jonathan; Strophe 3: Last Sigh. The emphasis is more on Jonathan than on Saul. Though Saul ultimately was a failure spiritually, as a warrior he had done much for the nation. His catastrophic defeat at the end of his life was a great tragedy for the nation, and David rightly laments his loss.

The Book of Jasher was apparently an open collection to which new works could be added.

2 SAMUEL 2

v. 1-7 David is chosen king over Judah at Hebron. Note again how the Urim and Thummim are used, one reply at a time. David's commendation to the Jabeshites was genuine, but it was also a political move inviting them to support his kingship.

v. 8-9 Abner maneuvers to prevent this by making Ishbosheth king over Israel at Mahanaim (east of Jordan, keeping some distance between himself and both David and the Philistines).

The relationship of the two years of Ishbosheth and the seven and a half years of David in Hebron is not entirely clear.

v. 10-32 Under the leadership of Joab David's forces defeat Abner's and force him to withdraw to Mahanaim. The attempt to settle the issue by a battle of champions without an all-out battle fails when apparently none of the twenty-four champions survive, resulting in a non-decision. Asahel (son of David's sister Zeruihah and brother of Joab) is killed by Abner in the ensuing battle.

On the "sons of Zeruihah" see 1 Chronicles 2:13-16.

2 SAMUEL 3

v. 2-5 The names of David's six sons are listed, each by a different wife. Maacah, Absalom's mother, was the daughter of an Aramean king (Geshur lies northeast of the Sea of Galilee). Though the account of David's sons indicates his growing power, it also conveys an ominous warning of the divisions that will grow in this polygamous family.

v. 6-39 These verses contain a story of great intrigue: Ishbosheth and Abner quarrel over Rizpah, Saul's concubine; Abner allies himself with David; Michal is returned to David; Joab kills Abner, avenging himself of his brother Asahel's death; David mourns Abner's death and promises to "repay the evildoer."

It is not clear if David's demand for Michal was motivated by pride, political considerations, or love. Deuteronomy 24 forbids the remarriage of divorced people, but in this case Saul had forced the divorce. Michal undoubtedly was happy to be queen.

A rather messy business, to say the least! At this point David, because of his insecure position, does not attempt to punish Joab for killing Abner. This he does later by charging Solomon to do so (cf. 2 Kings 2:5).

2 SAMUEL 4

Baanah and Recab, two Benjamites, kill Ishbosheth by means of a ruse. Bringing his head to David, they expect a reward. David "rewards" them by killing them.

Mephisbosheth, Jonathan's crippled son is rescued by his nurse. He is the remaining male descendant of the house of Saul who is first in line for the throne, but his handicap may have made him unviable as a candidate for the throne.

2 SAMUEL 5

v. 1-5 David is now ruler over all the tribes of Israel. He begins his rule at age 30, having ruled 7½ years at Hebron and now an added 33 years at Jerusalem. David had exercised patience in his long wait to be king. In v. 2 the people convict themselves of disobedience to God's will.

v. 6-10 David captures the citadel of Jerusalem from the Jebusites, who taunted David by saying that even "the lame and the blind" could hold this fortress. Joab apparently gained access to the city through the water system (compare 1 Chr 11:6).

Zion, originally the southeast hill of Jerusalem, becomes the "City of David." Note the location of the "City of David" on a map of Jerusalem.

v. 11-15 With the aid of Hiram, king of Tyre, David builds a palace in Jerusalem, where he with his family – including many concubines – establishes residence. Many wives, although warned against by the LORD (Dt 17:17), were considered a part of an oriental monarch's retinue. David permitted himself to be seduced by this worldly custom, suffering many troubles and heartaches later on because of this.

The events here are apparently in topical rather than chronological order. Hiram became king of Tyre rather late in David's reign. On the chronology of David's reign see Unger, *Kingdom of Priests*, p 244. David reigned in Jerusalem from about 1004 BC to 971 BC.

v. 17-25 David defeats the Philistines at Baal Perazim and Rephaim, with the LORD marching for him. The loss of the ark is now reversed as the Philistines lose their idols. "The sound marching in the tops of the balsam trees" shows that the victory comes from God.

2 SAMUEL 6 (1 Chr 13, 15)

Having finally established the center of the united kingdom of Israel in Jerusalem, David directed his attention to reorganizing Israel's worship. This probably happens about 977 BC, twenty-five years into David's reign, a year before Absalom's rebellion.

For about 80 years the ark had been standing in the house of Abinadab (about 20 years from the loss at

Shiloh to the victory at Ebenezer – 1 Sa 7:1; another 40 years under Samuel and Saul; and about 25 years under David).

Why David chose to have the ark transported on a new cart pulled by oxen is difficult to say. According to Numbers 4 the Levites were to carry the ark, and no one was permitted to touch it besides the bearers. The incident which leads to the death of Uzzah, who reached out to touch the ark to keep it from falling, was an indication of the LORD's displeasure. David also expressed anger—with himself for failing to act according to the LORD's directives? or with God for his judgment? (v. 8)

This incident led to the temporary postponement of transporting the ark further. It was placed for three months in the house of Obed-Edom. After this time the ark was carried by Levites to Jerusalem in the proper way.

Michal's displeasure over David's dancing before the ark as the procession nears the city is characteristic. She loved her teraphim, and admired David as a brave hero, but took offense at his pious enthusiasm and act of humility before his people. She had no children by David (v. 20-23) and so the line of Saul is not preserved.

See also 1 Chronicles 15 and 16 concerning arrangements for the ark. Parts of Psalms 95, 105, 106, and perhaps 68 are connected with this event.

2 SAMUEL 7

v. 1 The reference here to David's "rest from all his enemies" indicates that what follows in this chapter is not in chronological order. Later chapters bring added accounts of battles. The writer here brings the prophecy of Nathan, which refers to the LORD's building of an everlasting house for David, in order to tie this in with the account of the preceding chapter, which reported the bringing of the ark to Mt. Zion. Actually Nathan's prophecy must have been given at a later time in David's life.

v. 2 Nathan's name occurs here for the first time (see 2 Sa 12; 1 Kgs 1; 1 Chr 19:29; 2 Chr 9:29).

v. 5-16 Nathan's words to David constitute one of the outstanding prophecies of the Old Testament, pointing to the Messiah's everlasting kingdom. The promise includes Solomon, but primarily insofar as his kingdom is to be a type of the everlasting kingdom which the LORD would establish through the "seed" or "offspring" which is to come (the word "forever" occurs 3 times). See also Luke 1:32-33!

Keil's comments here are worth repeating (*Commentary*, p. 348):

The earthly form (of a temple or a kingdom) is perishable, the essence eternal. This essence was the dwelling of God in the midst of his people, which did not cease with the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, but culminated in the appearance of Jesus Christ, in whom Jehovah came to his people, and as God the Word, made human nature his dwelling-place (*ἐσκήνωσεν* – John 1:14) in the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father; so that Christ could say to the Jews, 'Destroy this temple (i.e. the temple of his body), and in three days I will build it up again' (John 2:19). It is with this building up of the temple destroyed by the Jews, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, that the complete and essential fulfillment of our promise begins. It is perpetuated within the Christian Church in the indwelling of the Father and the Son through the Holy Ghost in the hearts of believers (Jn 14:23; 1 Cor 6:19), by which the church of Jesus Christ is built up a spiritual house of God, composed of living stones (1 Tm 3:15; 1 Pe 2:5); and it will be perfected in the completion of the kingdom of God at the end of time in the new Jerusalem, which shall come down upon the new earth out of heaven from God, as the true tabernacle of

God with men (Re 21:1-3).

v. 18-29 David's prayer of thanksgiving and supplication to the LORD to fulfill this promise.

v. 19 "Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign LORD" (NIV) is subject to varied interpretations. Luther and Kretzmann translate this verse differently, applying it to Christ: "This is the manner of a man, who is God the LORD." In David's Psalms (2, 45, 72, 110, 132) we see repeatedly God's visitation to mankind through the presence of his Son, who is both God and man. This is the way God's will for mankind will be realized.

David's prayer is a gift of divine revelation, which could come only through the Spirit's inspiration. It expresses truths concerning the mercy and truth which are revealed in God's name and through the establishing of his everlasting "house" for his servant.

Thus in David's hour of disappointment over not being permitted to build a temple in Jerusalem we receive one of the outstanding Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament!

2 SAMUEL 8

This chapter summarizes the wars of conquest under David. Metheg Ammah is apparently Gath of the Philistines (1 Chr 18:1). David fought on three main fronts: against the Philistines, against the Arameans of Syria, and against the Transjordan nations of Ammon, Moab, and Edom. Refer to a map showing the extent of David's kingdom.

One war, that with the Ammonites and their Syrian allies (v. 12), is reported in more detail later in the book because it is connected with David's adultery (cf. chapters 10 and 11). This war occurs relatively early in David's rule, around 993 BC.

David's organization of his kingdom is also briefly described. Joab was the commander-in-chief of his army. Both Zadok (of Eleazar's line) and Ahimelech (of Abiathar's line) were retained as high priests, one at Gibeon and the other at Jerusalem. Why David maintained both is not known. Seriah was his scribe, Benaiah the head of his body-guard, and his sons served as advisors (literally, "priests").

The reference to Ahimelech, son of Abiathar, is puzzling. Early in David's reign we would expect Abiathar to be his priest. Abiathar was not removed until the reign of Solomon. Some emend the verse to read Abiathar son of Ahimelech. Another possibility is that Ahimelech, son of Abiathar, had replaced his father later in David's reign, and Abiathar had become a kind of senior advisor.

The closing verses of chapter 8 form a kind of conclusion to David's reign. The chapters that follow focus more on David's sin and decline.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (2 Sa 1-8)

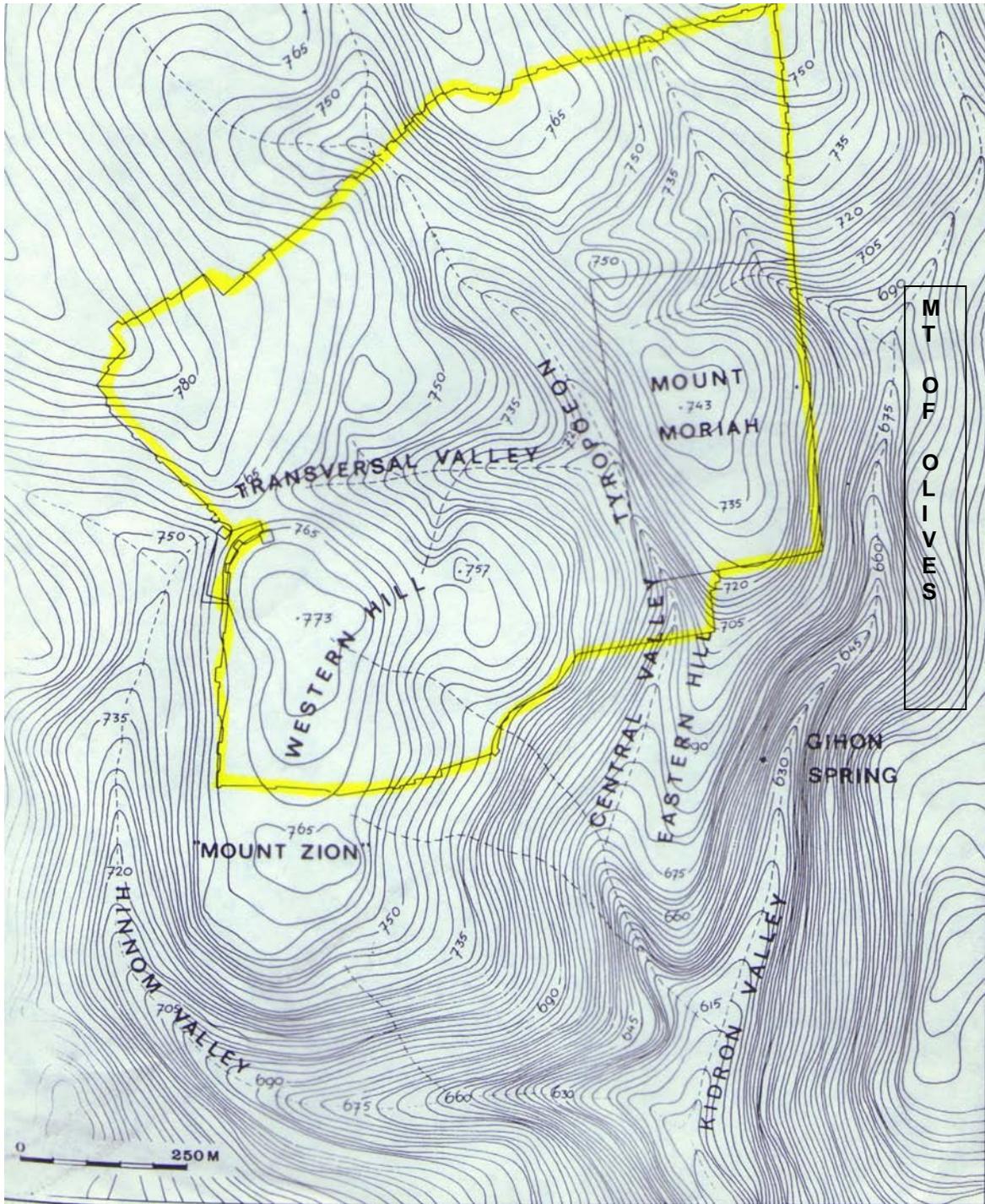
1. Give a brief outline of Second Samuel according to the phases of the rule of David.
2. What are some of the outstanding differences between 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings on the one hand and 1 and 2 Chronicles on the other?
3. Where was David when he heard the report of Saul's death? What did David do to the man who brought the report? Why?

4. Where is David's "Lament of the Bow" recorded? Where have we previously heard of this book? Why is the "Lament of the Bow" so named? Sketch its contents.
5. How was the rule of Israel divided after Saul's death? Who were the rival army captains? Why did their plan to settle the division fail? Who was killed in the aftermath?
6. Which intrigues led to Abner's death? Why did David fail to discipline Joab for this? What bloody act led to David's rule over all Israel?
7. What was David's first great act after being crowned king at Hebron? Describe the conquest.
8. What was David's second great military deed?
9. What was David's next great concern? Relate some of the strange events which occurred in connection with this act.
10. What lesson do we learn from God's judgment on Uzzah?
11. Why was David not the man to build the temple at Jerusalem (1 Chr 22:8; 28:3)? Which important prophecy did Nathan bring in this connection? Explain why this prophecy is definitely Messianic.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Review the topography of Jerusalem captured from the Jebusites. Note the three valleys, the mountains, and the location of the City of David, between the Kidron Valley and Tyropoeon Valley.

Compare the City of David proper with all of Jerusalem. Where, in relation to the City of David, was the Temple of Solomon built?



CHAPTER FORTY-ONE
DAVID'S SIN
AND TROUBLED HOUSEHOLD
(2 Sa 9-18)

2 SAMUEL 9

This chapter shows David's kindness to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's lame son. He restores Saul's lands to him under the guardianship of Ziba, and he has Mephibosheth eat at the king's table (see 1 Sa 2:15 and 2 Sa 4:4).

Ziba, Mephibosheth's caretaker, enters the story again in 2 Samuel 16:1-4 and 19:24-29.

2 SAMUEL 10

The battle against the Ammonites, which is summarized in chapter 8:3-6, is recounted here in more detail. This battle, which began when the Ammonites insulted David's ambassadors, was possibly David's fiercest struggle. Verse 14 of this chapter, when Joab returned briefly to Jerusalem, connects with what happens in the following chapter: David's sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah.

The "city" of the Ammonites which is referred to in this chapter (v. 8 and 14), is most likely Rabbath Ammon, named Rabbah in 2 Sa 11:1, the location of Amman, present capital city of Jordan.

2 SAMUEL 11

David's adultery with Bathsheba marks the beginning of a troubled life for David. Prior to this time David showed various weaknesses common to other Old Testament believers. He was not above simulation of madness (as at Gath), or prevarication (as at Nob). He drifted into polygamy. Here, however, he is guilty of sins of a most grievous nature. His chastisements are therefore severe.

The story of David's fall into sin is well-known. His adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah "displeased the LORD." Note the various ways in which David tries to cover up his adultery first of all by getting Uriah to sleep with Bathsheba during his furlough (v. 11-13), and then by having Uriah placed in fore-front of the siege of Rabbah.

2 SAMUEL 12

David remained impenitent in his sin for the better part of a year before the LORD sent Nathan to him. It wasn't a happy year, as we know from Psalm 32.

v. 1-4 Nathan's parable about the poor man's lamb exposes David's hypocrisy.

v. 5-6 David's unsuspectingly condemns himself. (The ideal outcome of preaching the Law.)

v. 7 "You are the man!"

v. 10-11 "The sword will never depart from your house." "Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you" (Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah). David's twofold sin (adultery/murder) is punished with the two dire prophecies mentioned here.

v. 13 “I have sinned against the LORD” ... “The LORD has taken away your sin.” The sin was truly forgiven. The earthly consequences, however, remained.

v. 14-25 The aftermath: the child begotten in adultery dies. David grieves, yet recognizes the LORD’s chastening hand and recovers. Psalm 51 reflects on this situation... Solomon is born (Jedidiah – “beloved of the LORD”) ... God approves and David is reassured.

A chapter which sets forth by way of example true repentance and absolution as nowhere else in all Scripture! A real preachment of law and gospel! The story provides an excellent example of both how to give and how to receive admonition and discipline.

2 SAMUEL 13

Amnon, David’s oldest son, commits an act of incestuous rape with his half-sister, Tamar, then sends her away. In a cold-blooded calculated murder Absalom, Tamar’s brother, avenges the shameful act against his sister by killing Amnon (incidentally, removing the heir to the throne ahead of him). Absalom flees, remaining in exile for three years until David’s grief over Amnon’s death subsides.

David’s polygamous life catches up with him in an undisciplined family. Nathan’s prophecy concerning the sword in David’s calamitous household is being fulfilled. This chapter also depicts sin in all its horror. We see how a moment’s gratification of a fleshly desire brings an entire household into disruption and sorrow.

We also see how David, although “furious” with Amnon’s sin, does not discipline accordingly. He is like an angry, yet frustrated parent who fails to act decisively probably because he senses that his own weaknesses may have contributed to the messy situation within his own household.

2 SAMUEL 14

v. 1-24 By means of a cunning trick Joab arranges a reconciliation between David and Absalom (“The Case of the Widow of Tekoah”). Why, we ask, was Joab so interested in intervening in this situation? Possibly he felt Absalom would one day succeed David. Or he may have been seeking to escape the punishment which threatened him for killing Abner (ch. 3:29). Or he may have genuinely thought he was serving David’s best interests.

Although David suspected Joab’s hand in this (v. 20), he permitted Absalom to return, but not allowing a face-to-face reconciliation.

v. 25-33 Absalom, handsome and vain, effects the complete reconciliation, also showing a nature in dealing with Joab which will get its way, no matter what kind of means are necessary. He sets fire to Joab’s field to force Joab to see him! His headstrong nature soon drives him also to attempt an act of insurrection, as the next chapter describes.

2 SAMUEL 15

v. 1-12 By various ploys (chariots and runners; insinuations against David’s concern for his people; an overt show of friendliness) Absalom succeeds in stealing the hearts of some of the people.

Absalom’s success is partly a result of David’s retrogressive attitude following his sin. His time of tight administration and brilliant victories is gone. Instead we note a lack of firmness, resolution, and a lack of

discipline which undermines his ability to rule. Absalom is clever enough to exploit these circumstances to his own advantage. Even Ahithophel, David's counselor, joins the conspiracy. Absalom is declared king at Hebron. This probably occurs relatively late in David's rule, around 976.

v. 12 Note Ahithophel's traitorous act (see Ps 41:9 and Mt 26:21-23). He was perhaps Bathsheba's grandfather (2 Sa 11:3, 2 Sa 23:34).

v. 13-23 David, however, has by no means lost his grip entirely. He decides to flee Jerusalem, no doubt wishing to avoid a siege of that city. David's 600 seasoned veterans who had been with him since his days in Gath, his bodyguard (Kerethites and Pelethites), and even a Philistine soldier who had entered his service (Ittai) accompany him. The countryside weeps in sympathy as David passes by.

v. 24-29 David still has two priests in charge: Abiathar and Zadok. At David's orders the ark, at first carried out with David, is returned to Jerusalem, an act of faith on David's part. Hushai, an old retainer, is left in the city as David's point of contact.

Ahimaaz, son of Zadok, and Jonathan, son of Abiathar, are to serve as informants (see 2 Sa 17:17).

2 SAMUEL 16

v. 1-4 Ziba, Mephibosheth's steward, acts deceptively, trying to gain David's favor by claiming that Mephibosheth is part of the conspiracy.

v. 5-13 David endures Shimei's curse, believing for the moment that it is the LORD's will.

v. 15-23 Absalom enters Jerusalem, and upon Ahitophel's advice uses David's ten concubines which he left behind, a form of mockery of a deposed ruler, particularly offensive in the case of a son.

In the meantime Hushai pretends to side with Absalom, skillfully playing on his fears and ego.

The plot thickens, with all the characters interestingly woven into the melodrama (Mephibosheth, Ziba, Shimei, Abishai, Abner, Ahithophel, Hushai, and ten concubines).

2 SAMUEL 17

v. 1-14 While Ahithophel counsels quick pursuit, Hushai advises delay. Absalom follows Hushai's advice. This allows David to escape and regroup.

v. 15-22 Hushai keeps David informed through Jonathan and Ahimaaz, the sons of the priests. David crosses the Jordan.

v. 23 Ahithophel, foreseeing the outcome of Absalom's folly, hangs himself (a shadow of Judas, cf. Ps. 41:9 and Jn 13:18).

v. 24-29 David receives help from the trans-Jordan people. Note especially Barzillai (v. 27), who enters the scene again later (2 Sa 19:31-39).

2 SAMUEL 18

v. 1-5 David divides his army into three companies under Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, while he himself remains in Mahanaim, east of Jordan in Gilead. He is confident of victory, asking his men to "be gentle

with Absalom.”

v. 6-8 The final battle takes place in “the forest of Ephraim.” Commentators are not agreed as to the location of this forest. Although the territory of Ephraim is located west of Jordan, the battle seems to take place in the rugged terrain between Mahanaim and the Jordan, east of Jordan.

v. 9-17 Absalom’s head (not his hair as is usually pictured) catches in a large tree as he flees from battle. Joab with ten armor-bearers kills him.

v. 18 Absalom dies with a large self-erected monument to his memory, but with no heir. The sons mentioned in 14:27 must have died in infancy.

v. 19-23 Ahimaaz, son of Zadok, runs to David with the news, but hesitates to bring the full report. The Cushite sent by Joab does so. David is overcome with heart-rending grief: “O Absalom, my son, my son!”

David reveals himself here and again in the opening verse of the next chapter (19) as an extremely sensitive person, “*ein Gefühlsmensch*,” one who could be deeply moved. No doubt this had much to do with his poetic expressions in the Psalms. In this case he is moved in to a state of grief whereby he can scarcely act. Part of his sensitivity probably is occasioned by the role he played in contributing to this tragedy.

CHAPTER FORTY FIVE – QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (2 Sa 9-18)

1. Which act of kindness on the part of David sheds light on his character?
2. Which incident led to the war against the Ammonites and Arameans? To which city did the Israelite army lay siege?
3. What happened while Israel besieged Rabbah? How did David try to cover up his sin?
4. What method did Nathan use to expose David’s sin?
5. Which Psalm reflects David’s repentance? What chastisements did David have to suffer even though his sin was forgiven?
6. Mention some of the intrigues which troubled David’s household.
7. By what clever ruse did Joab arrange for a partial reconciliation between David and Absalom?
8. Portray Absalom’s character as revealed in his actions. What signs of weakness were beginning to show themselves in David? To what unfortunate crisis was all of this building up?
9. What part do the following play in the story of Absalom’s rebellion:
Ahithophel – Shimei – Ziba – Abishai – Ittai – Ahimaaz and Jonathan – Hushai – Amasa –
Barzillai – Joab
10. Evaluate the actions of David and Joab in relation to Absalom.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO DAVID'S RETURN; APPENDICES (2 Sa 19-24)

2 SAMUEL 19

v. 1-8 Joab, not in sympathy with David's overwhelming grief, urges David as king to put this aside and take a hand again in the matter of bringing his people together.

v. 9-14 David offers terms of reconciliation with the elders of Judah, who had played a part in the insurrection, and even promises the command of the army to Amasa, the leader of the rebel army (2 Sa 17:25). David did not need to do this, since he was in the dominant position. He did, however, wish to reestablish unity in Israel and especially with his own people. Possibly he offered Amasa the leadership of the army because of Absalom's death at Joab's hands.

Joab, we shall find, is not so easily put down!

v. 15-23 As David is returning to Jerusalem and about to cross the Jordan, he is greeted by an apologetic Shimei and many Benjamites. In spite of Abishai's objection David forgives Shimei. For the moment, that is, in order to reunite his people. On his deathbed David still asks that his successor punish Shimei (1 Kgs 2:8-9).

v. 24-30 Here we get the true story of Ziba and Mephibosheth. Actually Mephibosheth had remained faithful to David, contrary to Ziba's report (16:1-4). In any case, David for the moment again decides to let the two "divide the field." Was David compromising simply to get at more urgent matters? He seems to be lacking his former decisiveness, both in dealing with Shimei as well as with Ziba. Perhaps the old warrior is getting tired of it all! Another possibility is that he was unable to ascertain who was telling the truth so he resorted to compromise as the next best thing.

v. 31-40 The aged Barzillai, who came to David's aid during his time of flight (17:27), does not wish to go back to Jerusalem with David, but sends along Kimham (according to Josephus, Barzillai's son) instead.

v. 41-43 As David is escorted back chiefly by men of Judah, the old tribal rivalry rears its ugly head even before David is able to let things settle down. Harsh words are spoken, preparing us for what is soon to happen, as reported in the next chapter.

2 SAMUEL 20

v. 1-2 Sheba, a Benjamite, calls up a rebellion against David. The old rivalry between the tribe of Saul and the tribe of David flares up again. "Every man to his tent" is the cry of rebellion (also used by Jeroboam 1 Kings 12:16). Israel follows Sheba. Judah remains with David.

v. 4 Amasa is reluctant to respond to David's order, which is to some extent understandable. He would be leading an army against men previously under his command.

v. 6 David then orders Abishai to take hold.

v. 9-10 Joab, however, is still very much in evidence. He kills Amasa by a deceitful tactic, pretending to greet him as a friend while stabbing him with a hidden dagger.

v. 11-22 Joab takes charge (as usual!) and pursues Sheba to Abel Beth Maacah. A woman saves the city from destruction by having Sheba's head delivered to Joab.

v. 23-26 The second section of the history of David's reign closes like the first section (ch. 8:16ff), with a list of the leading ministers of state.

The last days of David as reported in 1 Chronicles 22-29 show how he reorganized the army, established rules for the Levites, and prepared for the erection of the temple in Jerusalem.

2 SAMUEL 21

A collection of appendices lists other events of David's reign, not in any chronological order.

Appendix 1

This chapter tells of a three year's famine, which was brought to an end when some of the remnants of Saul's family were put to death at the request of the Gibeonites. Just when Saul "in his zeal for Israel and Judah had tried to annihilate" the Gibeonites (v. 2) we don't know. Joshua had promised under oath, as we recall, to spare them (Jos 9:3ff). We see how Yahweh visits judgment upon Saul, even after death. This probably took place in the earlier part of David's reign about 996-993 BC. It may be alluded to in Shimei's accusations.

The watch of Rizpah (see 2 Sa 3) in protecting the exposed bodies from beasts and birds of prey is touching. Eventually the seven who were killed together with the bones of Saul and Jonathan, brought from Jabesh Gilead, are buried properly "in the tomb of Saul's father Kish," and the famine ends (v. 14). Incidentally, Merab, whose five sons were killed to avenge Saul's act, was the daughter of Saul promised to David but given to Adriel (compare 1 Sa 18:12-19).

Appendix 2

David's rescue by Abishai in a war against the Philistines is also recorded in this chapter (v. 15-22). In v. 19 we are told that "Elhanan ... killed Goliath the Gittite, who had a spear with a shaft like a weaver's rod." In 1 Chronicles 20:5, a parallel account, we are told that Elhanan killed the brother of Goliath. Critics claim in their negative interpretation that Elhanan really must have killed Goliath, and that this slaying was later through repeated story-telling attributed to David. It appears that Chronicles has preserved the correct reading.



וַיִּדְ אֶלְחָנָן בֶּן־יֵעָרִי אֶרְגִּים בַּיִת הַלְחָמִי אֵת גְּלִיָּת הַגִּתִּי 2 Samuel 21:19

וַיִּדְ אֶלְחָנָן בֶּן־יֵעָרִי (יֵעָרִי) אֶת־לְחָמִי אַחֵי גְלִיָּת הַגִּתִּי 1 Chronicles 20:5

2 SAMUEL 22

Appendix 3

This chapter is similar in form and content to Psalm 18, a psalm of thanksgiving for victories. The psalm is divided in two parts:

1. Deliverance in the time of Saul's persecutions, v. 2-28;

2. Victories over foreign enemies, v. 29-51.

The psalm culminates in a Messianic reference: “He (Yahweh) shows unfailing kindness to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever” (v. 51).

2 SAMUEL 23

Appendix 4

Unfortunately the key verse of the “last words of David” (v. 5) recorded in this chapter are often poorly translated, especially by the KJV. The NIV is somewhat better. Keil translates as follows:

“For is not my house thus with God? For he that made me an everlasting covenant, provided with all, and attested; For all my salvation and all good pleasure, Should he not cause it to grow?”

Keil also interprets the “ruler” referred to in v. 3 as a reference to the Ruler who is to come, who rules “in righteousness” and “in the fear of God.” Luther wrote an extensive interpretation of these words (*LW* 15). (Compare Jer 23:5; Zech 9:9; Ps 72:2; also Is 44:3.)

Appendix 5

Appended in this chapter is also a list of “David’s mighty men,” those who helped him in his struggles. There are numerous textual variants from the parallel in 1 Chronicles 11:10-47. See the supplementary report.

Joab is not mentioned. He was brave, but without honor.

2 SAMUEL 24 (1 Chronicles 21:1-17)

Appendix 6

v. 1 The LORD “incited David” against Israel to give orders to number the people. This numbering, as David himself later declares, was “a very foolish thing” (v. 10), a transgression in God’s sight. Did God cause David to commit transgression? We know that this isn’t the case. Keil interprets: “God impels sinners to manifest the wickedness of their hearts in deeds, that the sinner may be brought to the knowledge of his wickedness and repent, or that by the continued manifestation of his wickedness he may become ripe for the judgment of God.” Kretzmann says: “God gave Satan leeway to tempt David to take this action.” One listens to these explanations and declares: “Who can explain the ways of God?” God’s purpose is fulfilled, in spite of David’s sin.

But why was this numbering of the people a transgression? Again there are various explanations: an act of self-exaltation (Keil); an action connected with imposing burdensome taxes (Ewald); evidence of a thirst for greater conquest (Kurtz).

Joab’s words in v. 3 seem to supply the answer, offering a mild rebuke because of David’s show of vanity (see also 1 Chr 21:3).

In any case, David himself came to a realization of having sinned and called the numbering to a halt before the job was finished (according to 1 Chronicles 21:6 the tribes of Levi and Benjamin were not numbered). As a punishment 70,000 Israelites died in a plague in three days, the punishment chosen by David who was given three options.

v. 18-25 The book closes with David's purchase of a threshing floor for the purpose of building an altar to the LORD, at the LORD's direction via his prophet Gad, so that the plague might be averted. The threshing floor was purchased from Araunah, a Jebusite. The floor became the site for the temple (1 Chr 21:27; 22:1; 2 Chr 3:1).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (2 Sa 20-24)

1. How deeply was David affected by grief when Absalom died? Who finally jolted him out of his grief?
2. What signs of weakness did David display on his way back to Jerusalem?

Evaluate David's handling of the Ziba-Mephibosheth affair.

Was it good judgment to make Amasa the commander?

3. Who stirred up another rebellion against David's rule? What were probable causes? How was it put down?
4. List the six appendixes recorded in 2 Samuel.
5. What was the cause of a three-year famine during the early part of David's reign? How was it brought to an end? Describe Rizpah's role.
6. Which words in David's "Song of Praise" (ch. 22) have Messianic import? Explain David's words: "The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness." Also the significance of v. 29 (compare 1 Kgs 11:36; 15:4).
7. Which verses in David's "Last Words" (ch. 23) contain Messianic references? Explain. How does the Old Testament frequently describe the coming Messiah? (Jer 23:5; Zech 9:9; Ps 72:2.)
8. Why was David and all Israel punished when a census was taken (ch. 24)? Why was Israel punished when David had ordered the census?
9. Explain the first verse of this chapter: "And he (the LORD ...) incited David ..."
10. Which three options did the LORD place before a repentant David? What was David's choice? Why were the people punished for David's sin? What was the fortuitous outcome of this unfortunate affair?

FOR ADDED STUDY

See how many of the following names which occur in the Samuels you can identify:

Merab	Mephibosheth	Jehoshaphat	Ishbosheth
Uzzah	Adoniram	Zeruiah	Michal
Kish	Joab	Nathan	Nabal
Abishai	Gad	Achish	Asahel
Hadadezer	Doeg	Abner	Zadok
Ahimelech	Amnon	Ziba	Hophni
Kiliab	Kimham	Phinehas	Adonijah

Sheba
Ittai
Rizpah
Hiram

Ichabod
Ahitophel
Jonadab
Shimei

Ahimaaz
Tamar
Barzillai

Jedidiah
Amasa
Baanah

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE **BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY**

In any study of history we invariably desire to relate the people and events we are studying to other people and events in a uniform system of chronology. We want to study the sequence of events to look for causal relationships. We want to relate events in one culture to those in another contemporaneous culture. To be even more specific, we desire to connect the events of Old Testament and New Testament history to the chronological system of the Christian era, which is now almost universally used in historical study. We desire to place events and the lives and deeds of people into the proper year either after or before the beginning fixed for this era.

This presents difficulties in the study of ancient history, including Old Testament history. The nations of antiquity did not have a uniform system of chronology. Each nation had its own system, which was generally very closely associated with the time span of its rulers, and frequently modified or even completely changed by the rise of a new ruler or dynasty. Also the dates assigned to the individual kings of Judah and Israel in 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles give evidence of the diverse chronological systems used in the two kingdoms, and of changes and modifications in the respective systems under the various kings and dynasties.

Throughout the Old Testament, as it portrays the succession of persons and events from creation to Malachi, a wealth of inspired chronological data is offered. These chronological facts are, however, not placed into one precise and uniform system of chronology for us. Sometimes, as previously stated, they are bound up with the chronological system of a specific realm. At other times chronological details are interspersed in genealogical tables. Sometimes, round numbers may be used. At other times, successive periods of time in a list may not follow one after the other but may overlap. Sometimes the Old Testament gives us the interval between very important events in the history of God's Old Testament chosen people (Ex 12:40; 1 Kgs 6:1).

Early Chronology

The chronology of the period before the Israelite monarchy is based almost entirely on the two time intervals lists about—the 480 years between the building of the Temple and the Exodus and the 430 years Israel spent in Egypt. There are no specific synchronisms with the dating systems of other nations. Starting with a date of about 966 BC for the building of the temple and adding 480 years we come up with a date of about 1446 BC for the Exodus. We then arrange the data concerning Solomon, David, Saul, the judges, and Joshua so that it fits into this period. To get a fit we must overlap some of the judges in the book of Judges. Naturally, the set of dates for the judges fit neatly into place because they have been shaped to fit the available space.

Next we take the 430 years in Egypt and add it to 1446 BC, yielding 1876 BC for the entry into Egypt. Then we take the data for the patriarchs in Genesis and use it to calculate a date of birth for Abraham of about 2166 BC.

For this whole period we have no synchronisms between biblical chronology and the independently derived chronologies of other nations. So as a next step we take the secular chronologies of Egypt and

other nations and set them along side the biblical chronology. In some cases this produced a good fit. A setting for the Exodus in 1446 fits well into the conventional dates of the 18th dynasty of New Kingdom of Egypt, and Joseph in Egypt fits well into the 12th dynasty of Middle Kingdom of Egypt.

Readers should be aware, however, that the precise dates for pharaohs that one often sees in history books are not that precise. There are competing versions of the standard chronology of Egypt, but the discrepancies between these different chronologies for this period are measured in years and decades, not centuries. However, the starting points for these chronologies of second millennium Egypt are not as well established as one might believe. The astronomical anchors that provide the framework for these chronologies are of questionable reliability, and the synchronisms with other nations often rest on circular argument. The use of lunar eclipses and Venus cycles to pin-point dates is useful only if the previously mentioned dates for star cycles are sound. . It is possible that there are significantly bigger margins of error than historians generally concede—errors of centuries rather than decades.

Extending the chronology further back into Genesis depends on connecting Abraham to the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11. If these genealogies are complete, a chronology of the world can be calculated. If they are not complete but have gaps, it is not possible to calculate a chronology except in broad estimates. The most famous attempt to create such a chronology was that of James Ussher.

The Ussher Chronology

Most people are somewhat familiar with the efforts of Archbishop Ussher to connect all the chronological data of the Old Testament to our Christian era calendar. Since 1701 the dates at which he arrived have been printed in the margin of most editions of the King James Version of the English Bible. While this chronology represents much careful and scholarly work it at crucial points nevertheless rests on judgments and assumptions that must be questioned.

For the period from creation to Abraham Ussher established his dates on the basis of Genesis 5 and 11. In these chapters we have genealogies of the Messianic line from Adam through Seth to Noah's three sons, and from Shem through Terah to Abraham and his two brothers. Ussher used the details included in these genealogies to establish a chronology for this period. He did so by adding up all the ages at which each person in the respective genealogies is said to have begotten the next individual mentioned.

With the assumption that every link in the genealogies is listed, this would be a sound procedure. It is an assumption, however, that cannot be made with certainty. Since Moses himself does not add up these ages, it cannot be asserted that they were given to provide data for a chronology. In a genealogy the important thing is to follow the direct line of descent. Listing every link in that descent is not necessary. It is evident that other genealogies in the Old and New Testament do not list all links.

In the genealogy from Joseph to Joshua (1 Chr 7:20-27) eleven links are mentioned, but the genealogy from Levi to Moses (Ex 6:16-20) covering approximately the same period, names only four links: Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses. It is significant that previously in relating his own birth, Moses leaves both his father and mother nameless. Amram and Jochebed may have been Moses' ancestors, not his immediate parents, but it seems more likely that there is a gap in the genealogy before Amram. Kohath is not to be understood as having been Moses' grandfather, since in that case Moses at age 81 would have had 8,600 male first cousins (Numbers 3:28). The genealogy of David at the end of Ruth is similarly abbreviated. Different reasons for the mention of four generations are given. One is that the LORD told Abraham that his people would spend four generations in a foreign land (Gen. 15:16), so this genealogy is constructed in a way to show that the four generations have passed. It is likely that this genealogy's purpose is to formally introduce Moses by mentioning his tribe, his clan, and his familial household.

In the Messianic genealogy of Matthew 1:6-11, as it covers the Davidic royal line up to the Babylonian captivity, we read: “Joram the father of Uzziah.” Though Matthew follows the direct line of descent, he omits three links, Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, all Davidic kings known to us from 2 Kings. He says of Joram that he “was the father of” his great-great-grandson Uzziah. Similarly Matthew states: “Josiah the father of Jechonias,” thereby jumping from grandfather to grandson, omitting King Jehoiachim, the link in between. Both in Greek and in Hebrew the word meaning “the father of” is used for fathering not only a son but also a more remote descendant, as long as he is in a direct line of descent.

Some have contended that links could not be missing in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, because the precise age is given at which each person begat the next individual mentioned, and even the number of years they lived after begetting him. Such details are admittedly not supplied in the other genealogies which have omissions.

The genealogy of Jesus in Luke does list Cainan as one additional link not mentioned in the Genesis list of the Messianic line from Shem to Abraham, although this may be due to a textual corruption involving the LXX and some later manuscripts of Luke. It should be evident that Ussher’s chronology computed from Genesis 5 and 11 would be lengthened by each link in the direct line that is not listed. Because of the possibility of an unspecified number of unlisted links in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 we cannot assert that the Old Testament gives us a precise chronology from creation to Abraham.

The following is a summary of the chronology that would be produced by the “Ussher method” and its variants. These dates are based on a 1446 Exodus. The dates given are to be understood as approximate dates. As noted below Ussher’s results for all the dates vary from the dates we are using because of differing assumptions about the date of Solomon and the time in Egypt.

- c. 966 BC The building of the Solomonic temple begun. Confer 1 Kings 6:1 and 1 Kings 11:43.
- c. 970 BC Solomon’s accession as king of Israel. Confer 1 Kings 11:43.
- c. 1003 BC David becomes king over all Israel in Jerusalem. Confer 1 Kings 2:11.
- c. 1010 BC David becomes king over Judah at Hebron. Confer 1 Kings 2:11.
- c. 1406 BC Israel’s entrance into Canaan under Joshua. Confer Deuteronomy 1:3,8,38; 1 Kings 6:1.
- c. 1446 BC The exodus from Egypt. Confer 1 Kings 6:1: “And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month that he began to build the house of the Lord.” The Septuagint has the 440th year.
- c. 1876 BC Israel’s entrance (i.e. Jacob’s 70 souls and their households) into Egypt. The Hebrew text of Exodus 12:40-41 reads: “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day, it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.” Bishop Ussher follows the Septuagint, which has the addition “and in Canaan” after “Egypt” in Exodus 12:40. Thus he allots only 215 years to the actual sojourn in Egypt and the other 215 to the sojourn of the patriarchs in Canaan. The reading of the Hebrew text which ascribes the entire 430 years to the sojourn in Egypt is in keeping with the round number of Genesis 15:13 where God prophesies a 400 year sojourn of Abraham’s seed “in the land that is not theirs.” A 215-year sojourn in Egypt does not fit well into the Exodus accounts of Israel’s growth from a

family into a populous nation feared even before Moses' birth by the pharaoh who knew not Joseph. With a sojourn of 215 years there would be 64 years between the death of Joseph and the birth of Moses. The 430 year sojourn in Egypt is best begun with the entry of Jacob's 70 souls and their households into Egypt as reported in Genesis 46 and Exodus 1:1.

- c. 2006 BC Birth of Jacob. According to Genesis 47:9 Jacob was 130 years old when he came to Egypt.
- c. 2066 BC Birth of Isaac. According to Genesis 27:26 Isaac was 60 years old at Jacob's birth.
- c. 2091 BC Abraham's entrance into the land of Canaan. Confer Genesis 21:5 and 12:4. Abraham had been in the land of Canaan 25 years at the birth of Isaac.
- c. 2166 BC Abraham's birth in Ur of the Chaldees. According to Genesis 12:3 Abraham was 75 years old when he entered Canaan.

Compare Ussher's dates:

- 1012 BC The founding of the Temple in Jerusalem (Our date 966 BC)
- 1491 BC The Exodus from Egypt (Our date 1446)
- 1921 BC God's call to Abraham (Our date 2091)
- 2348 BC Noah's Flood (Our date using Ussher's method would be about 2518)
- 4004 BC Creation (Our date using Ussher's method would be about 4174)

The reason Ussher's later dates are higher than contemporary calculations is that he was unaware of the Assyrian dates that led to the telescoping of the kings of Israel. His earlier dates are lower because he halved the stay in Egypt. The Septuagint also has different dates in Genesis 5 and 11 but these dates lack credibility.

Ussher, of course, is the subject of much ridicule today, but Ussher's work, the *Annales veteris testamenti, a prima mundi origine deducti* (*Annals of the Old Testament, deduced from the first origins of the world*), was a highly respected work of scholarship in its day. Ussher's proposed date of 4004 BC differed little from other biblically-based estimates such as those of Bede (3952 BC) and Ussher's near-contemporary, Scaliger (3949 BC), and such renowned scientists as Johannes Kepler (3992 BC) or Sir Isaac Newton (c. 4000 BC).

Carrying a good thing too far Ussher deduced that the first day of Creation began at nightfall preceding Sunday, October 23, 4004 BC in the proleptic Julian calendar near the autumnal equinox. The world began on Sunday because the seventh day was a Sabbath. Jewish days begin with darkness just as the first day did. The commentator Lightfoot similarly deduced that Creation began at nightfall near the autumnal equinox, but in the year 3929 BC, though he granted "That the world was made at equinox, all grant,—but differ at which, whether about the eleventh of March, or twelfth of September; to me in September, without all doubt." This was, of course, based on the fact that the Jews had two new years, civil and religious. Note again the role of assumptions here—the chief assumption being that one can assume a straight-line continuity in the calendar since creation—an entirely untenable assumption since there have been numerous calendar reforms, and ancient calendars were observational not calculated.

We are on somewhat more solid ground in the chronology of the kings but here too precision eludes us.

The Chronology of the Divided Kingdom

For this period the Old Testament does give us precise, detailed chronological information. Using the chronological system followed in each of the two kingdoms, 1 and 2 Kings give us the number of years of the reign of each of the successive kings of Judah and Israel. In addition the reign of each king of Judah is synchronized with the reign of the contemporary king of Israel using the Judean system; similarly Israelite scribes used their own system to describe the reign of a Judean king.

Yet this precise chronological information still presents a double difficulty to the biblical scholar. The one difficulty is that of understanding the two divergent chronological systems used in the two kingdoms and their synchronizations. The other difficulty is that of relating the precise data given to our Christian era calendar.

For the second difficulty, the findings of archeology have offered valuable help. One such help is the discovery of the Assyrian eponym list covering a period of 244 years. In this list every successive year is named after a prominent Assyrian official (similar to the Roman practice of naming years for consuls). The individual year, called an eponymy, at the same time furnishes information concerning important happenings during the year. The eponymy of Bur-Sagale, governor of Guzana, offers the detail that an eclipse of the sun took place in the month of Simanu. That makes it possible to fix this year as 763 BC, and the entire list as covering the years 892 to 648 BC. In the eponymy of Daian-Assur, 853 BC, Shalmaneser III fought the battle of Qarqar against a group of western kings including Ahab of Israel. Twelve years later in the eponymy of Adad-rimani, 841 BC, Shalmaneser received tribute from Jehu of Israel. This makes it possible to calculate 841 BC as the date of Jehu's accession and of the death both of Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah, and 851 as the last year of Ahab. By working forward and backward, Christian era dates can be assigned to the reigns of all the other kings. The date for the division of the kingdom can be set at 931/30 BC; the fall of Samaria at 723/722 BC; and the fall of Jerusalem at 587/86 BC. To get a precise calendar we also have to solve the problems raised by the two different systems of dating kings.

The breakthrough in this study was made by Edwin R. Thiele in the years following World War II. The following is an emended version his chronology. The most problematic area is the reign of Hezekiah and the kings surrounding him. It is here that we have made the greatest revisions to Thiele's dates.

The Dates of the Kings of Israel and Judah

Israel			Judah		
King	Overlapping Reigns	Reign	King	Co-regency	Reign
Jeroboam I		931/30-910/9	Rehoboam		931/30 - 913
			Abijam		913 - 911/10
Nadab		910/9 - 909/8	Asa		911/10 - 870/69
Baasha		909/8 - 886/85			
Elah		886/85 - 885/84			
Zimri		885/84			
Tibni		885/84 - 880			
Omri	885/84 - 880	880 - 874/73			
Ahab		874/73 - 853	Jehoshaphat	873/72 - 870/69	870/69 - 848
Ahaziah		853 - 852	Jehoram	853 - 848	848 - 841
Joram		852 - 841	Ahaziah		841
Jehu		841 - 814/13	Athaliah		841 - 835
Jehoahaz		814/13 - 798	Joash		835 - 796
Jehoash		798 - 782/81	Amaziah		796 - 767
Jeroboam II	793/92 - 782/81	782/81 - 753	Azariah	791/90 - 767	767 - 740/39
Zechariah		753 - 752			
Shallum		752			
Menahem		752 - 742/41	Jotham	751/50 - 740/39	740/39 - 736
Pekahiah		742/41 - 740/39	Ahaz	742 - 736 728 - 715	736 - 728
Pekah	752 - 740/39	740/39 - 732/31			
Hoshea		732/31 - 723/22	Hezekiah	728 - 715	715 - 697
			Manasseh		697 - 642/41
			Amon		642/41 - 640/39
			Josiah		640/39 - 608
			Jehoahaz		608
			Jehoiakim		608 - 597
			Jehoiachin		597
			Zedekiah		597 - 586

Thiele set up his chronology by a painstaking trial and error method. He tried out every possible solution indicated or suggested by the biblical text of Kings until the following conclusions proved successful in bringing the two systems into harmony with each other.

The major flaw in Thiele's system was that he did not accept the co-regency of Hezekiah with Ahaz which is necessary to harmonize the data in Kings. He posits errors in the data of Kings at this point. It should also be noted that Thiele's system has to balance out because he sets the length of the co-regencies which are suggested by circumstances in the text the exact length which he needs to get a good fit.

There are other chronologies which suggest other changes to Thiele's system, but he can be credited with a breakthrough which shamed the critics' scoffing at the "mysterious numbers of the Hebrew Kings." In the next section we will walk through the key steps in deciphering the chronology of the kings.

Chronology of the Kings of Israel And Judah

The following chart identifies the key problems of discrepancies in elapsed years. These problems are summarized in the comments that follow the chart.

I. The Data

Israel	Judah	Synchronism	Total Years
1 Jeroboam I	Rehoboam	931 BC Division of kingdom	Israel 98 years
	Abijam		Judah 95 years
Nadab	Asa		Actual 90 years
Baasha			
Elah			
Zimri			
Tibni			
Omri			
Ahab	Jehoshapat	853 BC Ahab at Qarqar (?)	
Ahaziah	Jehoram		
Joram	Ahaziah	841 BC Both killed by Jehu	

931 is the beginning of the reigns of both Rehobam and Jeroboam

841 is the end of the reign of both Joram and Ahaziah.

The time between these events must be the same.

Israel	Judah	Synchronism	Total Years
2 Jehu	Athaliah	841 BC Jehu pays tribute	Israel 143 years
Jehoahaz	Joash		Judah 166 years
Jehoash	Amaziah		Assyria 120 years
			Actual 118 years
Jeroboam II	Azariah		
Zachariah			
Shallum			
2b Menahem	Jotham	743 BC Menahem's tribune	Israel 31 years
Pekahiah			Assyria 20 years
Pekah			Actual 20 years
Hoshea			
		723/22 BC Samaria Falls, Ahaz's 12th year and Hezekiah's 6 th	
	Hezekiah		
	Manasseh		
	Amon		
	Josiah		
	Jehoahaz		
	Jehoiakim		
	Jehoiachim		
	Zedekiah	586 BC Fall of Jerusalem	

II. The Problems

1. On the basis of the biblical data for the lengths of the kings' reigns, the total elapsed times for the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah do not fit within the synchronisms with Assyria. In other words the totals for the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah do not agree with each other, nor with the Assyrian year list.

For the first period the total years of the kings of Judah 95 are and the total years of the kings of Israel are 98.

For the second period the corresponding data is Judah 166 years, Israel 143 years , but the Assyrian year list correlated with the synchronisms between Israel and Assyria allows only 120 years.

In the last part of this period a succession of kings of Israel totals 31 years, but the Assyrian year list allows only 20 years for this period.

2. Other types of "contradictions" occur in the biblical data.

Did Ahaziah of Judah become king in the 12th year of Joram of Israel or the 11th? (2 Kings 8:25 or 9:29?)

Did Joram of Israel begin to reign in the 18th year of Jehoshaphat or the 2nd year of Jehoram of Judah (2 Kings 3:1 or 2 Kings 1:17)? If Joram came to the throne in the 2nd year of Jehoram, how could Jehoram have come to the throne in the 5th year of Joram as 2 Kings 8:16 says?

The problems are especially severe with the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. See the supplemental report and the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Summer, 1990, p 181-191.

III. Approaches To The Problem

There have been four basic approaches to this problem.

1. Ignore the biblical data as unreliable, resulting in a short chronology.
2. Ignore the Assyrian synchronism as incorrect, resulting in a long chronology.
3. Blame all the problems on textual transmission.
4. Carefully study all the available data to determine if there are principles of Hebrew and Near Eastern chronology which make it possible to reconcile all of the data into a harmonious system.

We follow Thiele in attempting approach number 4.

IV. Solutions to the Problems

By trial and error and playing with the data Thiele came to the following conclusions:

1. In Israel the regnal year began with Nisan (March/April), while in Judah it began with Tishri (September/October).
2. At the time of the schism Judah reckoned the years of its kings according to the accession year system, while Israel started with the non-accession year system. (See the explanation of these systems below.)

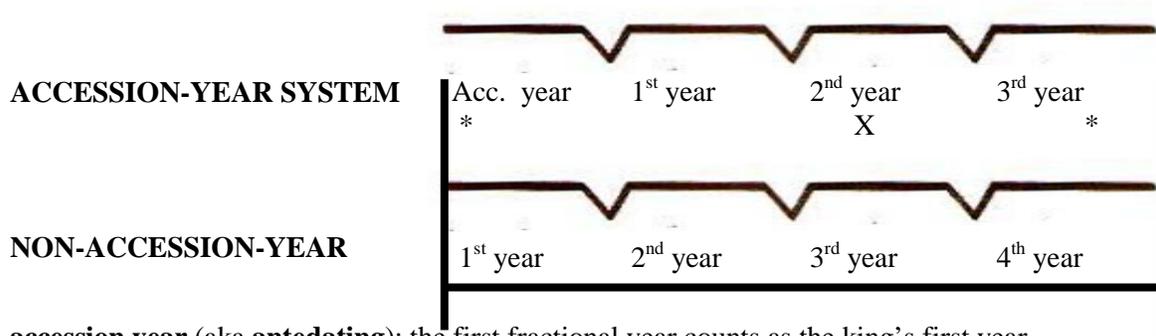
3. With Jehoram Judah switched over to the non-accession year system until the time of Amaziah, when the accession year system was again employed. Israel used the non-accession year system until the time of Jehoash when it adopted the accession year system and retained it to the end of its history.
4. Both Israel and Judah had co-regencies of fathers and sons or overlapping reigns of rivals. In assigning the length to their reigns both kings are credited with the overlapping regnal years involved in a co-regency or rival rulership; but the statements which indicate the time when someone became king invariably refer to the beginning of his sole rule.

Let us look at the evidence that supports these conclusions.

Question 1: Did Israel Use Accession Year Or Non-Accession Year Dating?

Comparing the systems: The asterisks mark the beginning and end of a reign:

In the **accession year system** (aka **post-dating**): The numbering of a king's reign starts with the first full calendar year. The first months of his reign before his first new year's day are not counted.



Non-accession year (aka **antedating**): the first fractional year counts as the king's first year.

In what year of the king did the event marked with an X occur?

The second or third depending on the system.

How many years did this king rule?

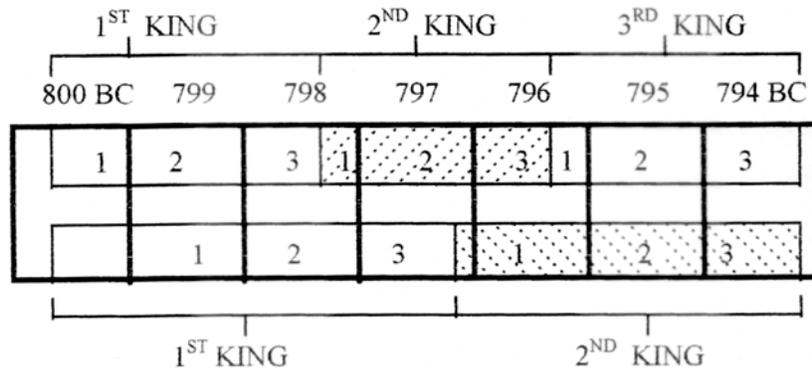
Three or four depending on the system

How does this principle explain contradictions like these listed above?

Did Ahaziah of Judah become king in the 12th year of Joram of Israel or the 11th? (2 Kings 8:25 or 9:29?) It depends on which system is being used in individual verses.

How does this explain the discrepancy of the totals for elapsed years between the king lists of Israel and Judah?

In the non-accession system the year in which there is a change of kings is counted by both kings. Thus, if one nation is using the accession system and the other the non-accession system, the total years in the king list of the non-accession year nation will increase by one year for each change of kings as compared to the king list of the nation using the accession year system.



The top line uses a non-accession system. There are 3 kings, who rule 2 actual years each for a total of 6 actual years, but they have 9 regnal years since part-years count as wholes.

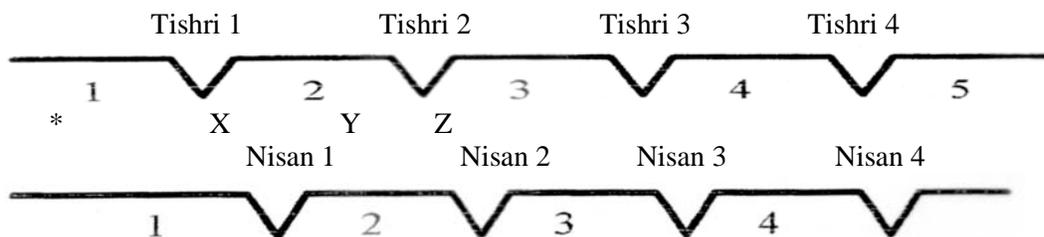
The second line uses the accession year system. There are 2 kings who rule 3 years each, 6 actual years and six 6 regnal years. Result: A 3 year contradiction

During a period in which the total years of the kings of Israel and Judah should be the same, we find that the total for Israel is 7 years too large. During this period Israel got seven new kings.

During this period _____ must have used the accession year system and _____ the non-accession system.

Question 2: Did Tishri Or Nisan Begin The Regnal Years?

A king begins his reign at the asterisk during the summer. The following Tishri new years (in fall) and Nisan new years (in spring) are marked by the dips in the lines. The non-accession system is followed.



How would you date the events X, Y, and Z?

- X is in the second Tishri year but the first Nisan year.
- Y is in the second Tishri year and the second Nisan year.
- Z is in the third Tishri year but the second Nisan year.

Events in the reigns of Solomon and Josiah show that Judah used a Tishri regnal year. There is no direct evidence for Israel, but a Nisan year works.

Question 3: How Does One Nation Refer To The Kings Of The Other?

Both use their own system in referring to the kings of other nations.

Question 4: Were There Co-Regencies Or Interregna?

Case 1: A father and son rule successively for 10 years each

King A 10 yrs	King B 10 yrs
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Two ten years reigns, no co-regency = 20 years elapsed time

Case 2: A father and son in Judah each rule 10 years but there is a 5 year co-regency. In Israel during the same period a father rules 10 years and his son rules 5 years

Judah

King A 10 yrs	X	Y	King B 10 yrs
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Israel

King C 10 yrs	King D 5 yrs
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In Judah: two ten-year reigns, with a five-year co-regency = 15 actual years but 20 regnal years.
In Israel a ten-year reign and a five-year reign = 15 actual years and 15 regnal years.

When did events X and Y occur?

X is the 4th year of King A or the 4th year of King C.
Y is in the 6th year of King A, the 6th year of King C, or the 1st year of King B.

During whose reign did King B of Judah become king?

In the reign of King C or King D depending on whether you date from the coregency or the sole rule.

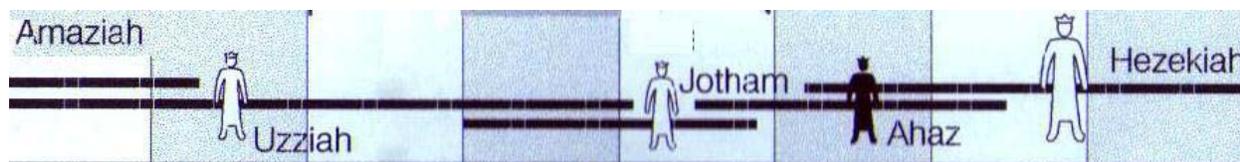
During whose reign did King D of Israel become king?

In the reign of King A or King B.

How does this principle solve this contradiction?

Did Joram of Israel begin to reign in the 18th year of Jehoshaphat or the 2nd year of Jehoram of Judah (2 Kings 3:1 or 2 Kings 1:17)? If Joram came to the throne in the 2nd year of Jehoram, how could Jehoram have come to the throne in the 5th year of Joram as 2 Kings 8:16 says?
All are true depending on which system is being used.

There were co-regencies in both nations, but no interregna. Evidence for the co-regencies is mostly indirect, e.g., double dating. Often there are indications in the text.



- Amaziah was a prisoner of war
- Uzziah was a leper
- Jotham was king in unstable times
- Ahaz and Hezekiah were political and religious opposites favored by different parties.

Question 5: Did Israel And Judah Always Use The Same Method Of Chronology Or Did They Switch?

Until Jehu Judah used the accession system, Israel the non-accession. After Athaliah Judah also used non-accession. Both switched to accession as Assyrian influence grew.

Conclusion

The best evidence for this system is that it works. It produces a chronology which harmonizes the biblical and Assyrian chronology.

V. So What?

This theory demonstrates the possibility of harmonizing the data in Scripture when the principles of chronology which it uses are understood. It however remains a theory, not a proven fact. Some of Thiele’s conclusions are still questioned, but his basic approach has been vindicated.

We here resume the listing of the chronology after the digression on the chronology of the kings.

Figuring Chronology from the Babylonian Captivity of Judah

For this period there are good contemporary records so the dates are relatively sound. Variations in most cases are only a year or two.

- 605 BC The first deportation of Jews under Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel and other royal personages, Daniel 1:1-4.
- 597 BC The second deportation of Jews, 2 Kings 24:14-16. The deportees include King Jehoiachin and the prophet Ezekiel.
- 586 BC Destruction of Jerusalem and the third deportation.
- 539 BC The Persian conquest of Babylon under Cyrus, and the decree of Cyrus, Ezra 1:1-3.
- 537 BC Return of the Jews to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2) or Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:11) about 50,000.
- 520 BC The prophets Haggai and Zachariah arose to exhort and inspire the remnant to complete the temple.

- 515 BC Completion of the second temple.
- 479 BC Seventh year of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) when Esther became queen, Esther 2:16.
- 458 BC Arrival of Ezra in Judah with an additional company of returning Jews.
- 444 BC Arrival of Nehemiah as governor of Jerusalem.
- The prophet Malachi was active during the era of Ezra and Nehemiah.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951, revised 1965.

A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings, a condensed paperback of 89 pages by the same author, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977.

Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1964, revised 1998.

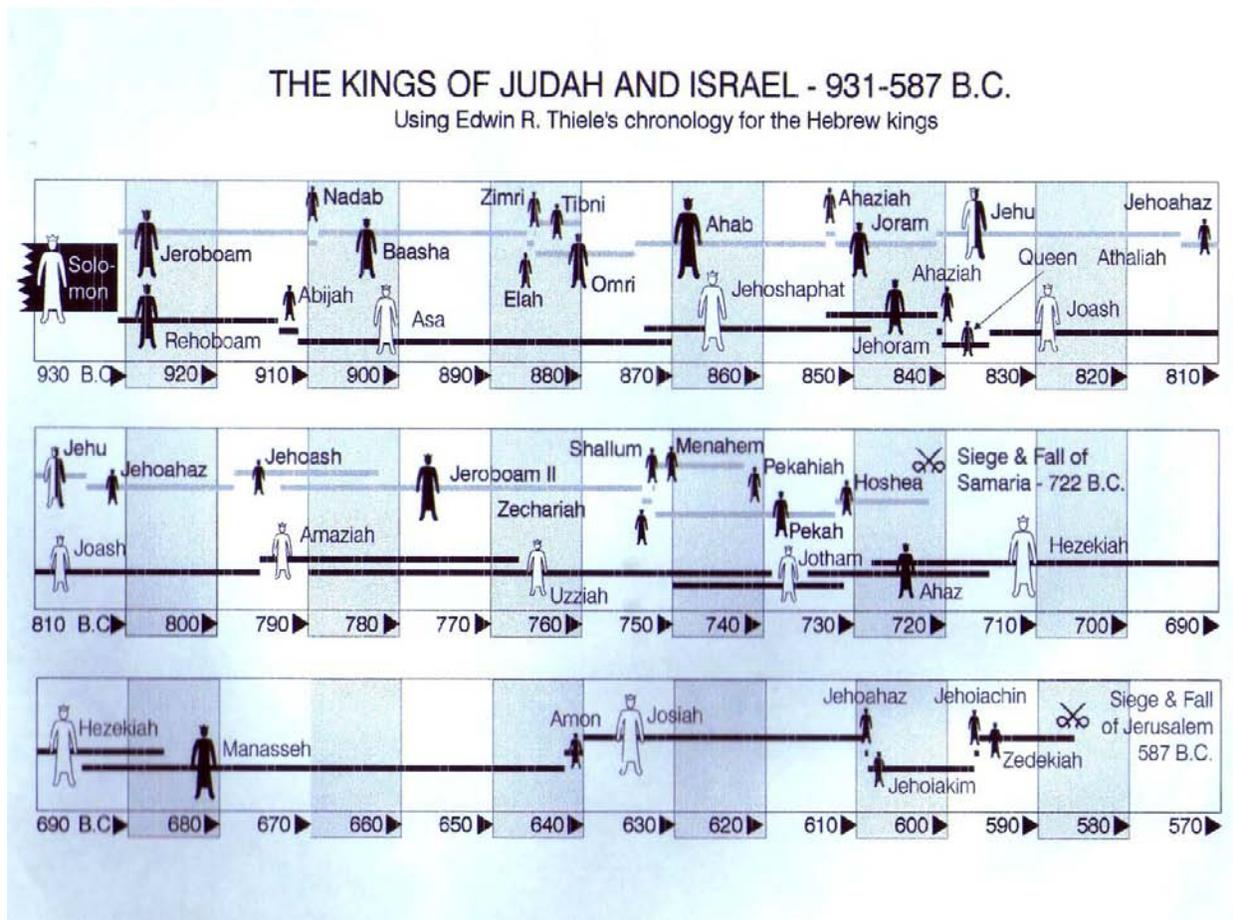
John F. Brug, "The Astronomical Dating of Ancient History before 700 BC," University of Minnesota, 1981, WLS essay file.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What difficulty do we experience in general when trying to relate Old Testament history to our own system of chronology?
2. Why is this problem compounded when studying 1 and 2 Kings?
3. What problems existed in the chronology of the Judges?
4. Which two biblical intervals between important events give us a fix on important eras? What are the Bible references?
5. Whose chronology was generally followed for many years? Why?
6. Why are Ussher's assumptions inconclusive?
7. Can you give examples of genealogies where not all links are listed?
8. Which word causes misunderstandings in these genealogies?
9. What is the added problem in 2 Kings?
10. What helps us to relate the years of the Kings of Israel and Judah to the Christian era calendar?
11. Define "eponym" list.
12. Give a brief summary of the problems and the solutions in the chronology of the kings.

13. Give the chronology which we set up pertaining to the following dates of Old Testament history:

- a. The building of the Solomonic temple _____
- b. David as king over all Israel _____
- c. The exodus from Egypt _____
- d. Israel's entrance into Egypt (Jacob's 70 souls) _____
- e. Abraham's entrance into Canaan _____



CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR INTRODUCTION TO KINGS; SOLOMON (1 Kings 1-11)

Like the two books of Samuel, the two books of Kings were originally one book. The Septuagint and the Vulgate divided this into two sections. Our modern Hebrew Bible arrangement follows the Bombergiana (a printed Hebrew edition of the sixteenth century). The position in the Hebrew text is among the Former Prophets.

The contents of 1 and 2 Kings deal with the history of Israel from the beginning of Solomon's reign until shortly after the beginning of the Exile (970-586 B.C.: 384 years). The history is treated from a theocratic point of view and presents the various persons according to the manner in which their piety or wickedness had an effect on the preservation or the corruption of the people of God.

The principal factors on the one hand are the kings as leaders of the people, and on the other hand the prophets as teachers. The former generally (always in the Northern Kingdom) were destructive in their influence. In the case of Judah several kings served to preserve the realm (only two, Hezekiah and Josiah receive unconditional praise, and five others receive conditional approval).

THEME: GOD'S RULE OF HIS PEOPLE DURING THE TIME OF THE KINGS

The period covered can be divided into three parts:

1. The reign of Solomon (970 to 930 BC) 1 Kgs 1-11
2. The Divided Kingdoms of Judah and Israel (930 to 722 BC) 1Kgs 12-2 Kgs 17
3. Judah alone up to the Babylonian Exile (722 to 586 BC) 2 Kgs 18-25

The Northern Kingdom has nine changes of the royal line. Only five of these met even the minimal standard for a dynasty, two kings in succession. Judah has only the House of David. Elijah and Elisha, the great prophets of Israel, play a prominent role in Kings. The major writing prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah appear very little in Kings.

AUTHORSHIP

The Talmud names Jeremiah as author, no doubt because of what Hummel refers to as the book's "strongly deuteronomic diction" which is "so much like the prose of Jeremiah" (*The Word Becoming Flesh*, p. 148). Other than this there is no evidence for Jeremiah's authorship.

The books of Kings could not have been completed before Jehoiachin's release from prison, since this is reported in 2 Kings (ca. 560 B.C.), neither could they have been completed after the return of the exiles from Babylon (537 BC), since this is not reported in the books. We conclude, therefore, that they were completed sometime during Judah's captivity in Babylon.

Because of the unity of the books we conclude that they were composed by one person, a person with the language, style, and viewpoint of a prophet. Perhaps he was a product of a school of the prophets, from Ramah, Shiloh, Gilgal, or more likely Jerusalem.

It is apparent that the writer used written sources which he often quoted verbatim. This style of stringing together sources is called paratactic. This is apparent in the different systems of chronology that are preserved in the text and in such passages as 1Kg 8:8 which could no longer have been true at the time of the writing of the book. The Kings account of Hezekiah and Sennacherib appears to be the account of Isaiah.

The author refers to the following sources of information:

1. The Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kg 11:41)
2. The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (1 Kg 15:23)

3. The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (1 Kg 14:19)
(2 and 3 are not to be identified with 1 and 2 Chr which were written later)

Whether these chronicles were the work of the official court recorders (*Mazkirim*) is in dispute, at least in the Northern Kingdom, where frequent dynastic changes may have interfered with their continuity.

Additional available records are listed in Chronicles.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the books is to show that the fall of Israel and Judah is due to their unfaithfulness to Yahweh, but that the LORD still faithfully upheld the promise of “the sure mercies of David,” (Is 55:3; 2 Sa 7). This is the purpose for the note at the end of the books about the elevation of Jehoiachin to the king’s table (II, 25:29).

This contrasts with Chronicles which focuses more on the good actions of the kings of Judah and pays scant attention to Israel.

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1 KINGS 1

These opening chapters of 1 Kings present David’s final days and the palace intrigues leading up to Solomon’s succession. David was 70 years old at this time, infirm, apparently in need of “bed warmth” from Abishag.

Adonijah, David’s 4th son (2 Sa 3:4), undisciplined, aspires to the throne even though Solomon has been designated by the LORD through the prophet Nathan to succeed David (2 Sa 12:24-25, 1 Chr 23:1). The royal court is divided. Joab and Abiathar the priest join with Adonijah, Zadok the priest, Benaiah, Nathan, and others remain faithful to David and Solomon.

Nathan brings Bathsheba into the situation. Solomon’s right to the succession is reaffirmed. Adonijah’s attempted coup is thwarted, and he escapes with his life by fleeing to the “horns of the altar” (Ex 21:14). 1 Chronicles 29:21 refers to a public ratification of Solomon’s rule.

1 KINGS 2

David charges Solomon to be faithful to the Law of the LORD and places the “unfinished reckonings” with Joab and Shimei into Solomon’s hands. David dies after a rule of 40 years (7 in Hebron; 33 in Jerusalem), and Solomon becomes king at the age of 20 (971/70 B.C.).

Adonijah makes the fatal request to marry Abishag, (which isn’t hard to see through!), and is put to death. Abiathar the priest of the Eli/Ithamar line is deposed from office — in fulfillment of the word spoken concerning the house of Eli (1 Sa 2:30-33) — and Joab and Shimei are executed.

“The kingdom was now firmly established in Solomon’s hands” — 1 Kgs 2:46.

Much intrigue — but the plan of God for the House of David prevails!

1 KINGS 3

Solomon:

1. Makes an alliance with Egypt, marrying Pharaoh's daughter (though this marriage was not illegal it was an ominous note of things to follow!);
2. Offers sacrifices at Gibeon (the temple services at Jerusalem have not been established as yet);
3. Is reassured by the LORD in a dream, and asks for "a discerning heart."
4. Demonstrates his wisdom in an unusual judicial ruling in the case of two prostitutes.

1 KINGS 4

This chapter records Solomon's organization of his council and his kingdom (v. 1-9), the extent and the wealth of his kingdom (v. 20-27), and his widely recognized wisdom (v. 29-34).

The strange use of the term "priest" occurs again. As expected Zadok and Abiathar are listed as priests, but Azariah is also listed as priest. Is this "priest" in the sense of advisor as in the previous case of David's sons? Or perhaps court chaplain?

The account of the organization of the nation may provide an ominous warning of the schism to come. Solomon seems to be breaking down the tribal structure of the nation, and Judah is not mentioned among the administrative districts. Strangely, several of the administrators are named only by their patronymic. Their personal names are missing.

It has been calculated that if each person at his court received 2 lbs of bread per day, there would have been 14,000 persons attached to it. Solomon's acquiring of many horses (v. 26) is contrary to Moses' directive in Deuteronomy 17:16. Note: the precise value of many of the units of measurement is uncertain so one will find very different estimates of the quantities.

Although "during Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree" (v. 25), the show of opulence at the king's court does not bode well for the future.

Of the "3000 proverbs" of Solomon Scripture gives us a small selection in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. He wrote "a thousand and five songs" (v. 32), yet only two psalms (72 and 127) and Song of Songs are credited to Solomon in Scripture.

1 KINGS 5

Arrangements are made with Hiram of Tyre for the building of the temple at Jerusalem.

The numbers given for laborers involved in this project show its immensity: 10,000 in Lebanon; 20,000 at home working with these in rotation; 70,000 transporters; 80,000 stonecutters — a total of 180,000 men on one building, which by present-day standards wasn't very large at all (though the courtyards may have been). In addition there were 3,000 overseers.

(Discrepancies with the parallel account in 1 Chr 2 can be traced to various reasons: inclusion or non-inclusion of Canaanite workers; different methods of reckoning; copyist errors, etc. It seems that the Israelites put in one month shifts four times a year. Canaanites worked year-round on rougher jobs.)

1 KINGS 6

v. 1 A very important verse for biblical chronology, placing the beginning of the temple construction 480 years after the Exodus and in the 4th year of Solomon's reign. As previously mentioned this definitely points to the early date for the Exodus.

For pictures and diagrams of the temple and its furnishings see the powerpoint.

v. 2 The temple's size — 60 cubits long by 20 cubits wide by 30 cubits high (90' by 30' by 45') — was twice the size of the tabernacle in basic dimensions. It was a small building built to serve as the chancel, not to accommodate the worshippers.

v.3 An added feature of the temple was the porch, on the east side at the entrance, extending across the width and adding 10 cubits to the length of the building.

v. 7 No sound of chisel or hammer at the construction site! Another feature as we note from v. 5-6 were individual chambers, built in three tiers around the outside walls. Each tier was 5 cubits high. These rooms were added for use of the priests and for storage of vessels and other supplies.

v. 16 The Most Holy Place was 20 c. by 20 c. by 20 c. (30 ft by 30 ft by 30 ft) (a cube). The Holy Place was 40 c. by 20 c. by 30 c. high (60 ft by 30 ft by 45 ft)

v. 23 The angels in the Most Holy Place faced out toward the nave instead of facing each other over the Mercy Seat. The wingspan of each measured 10 c. and thus touched the walls on each side as well as each other in the center.

v. 36 The size of the "inner courtyard" (Court of the Priests) is not given. It has been estimated as covering a space of 10,000 square cubits. Later evidence is that the entire temple precinct was 500 cubits by 500 cubits. The description of the temple gates and courts in Ezekiel may be patterned after Solomon's temple.

v. 38 The time of building was 7 years.

1 KINGS 7

v. 1-12 Solomon's house, which took 13 years to build, had dimensions 100 c. by 50 c. by 30 c. high (150 ft by 75 ft by 45ft). It included larger porch extensions, one containing the Hall of Justice, and another the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon, in which 300 shields of hammered gold were kept. Keil states: "The description of the house is so brief that it is impossible to form a distinct idea of its character" (Vol 3, p. 89). It undoubtedly had both private living quarters and large public reception areas.

v. 15-22 A special feature of the temple consisted of two bronze pillars, each 18 c. (27 ft) high, elaborately decorated with bronze capitals. The pillars were placed on the temple portico and named JAKIN ("He shall establish") and BOAZ ("In him is strength"). There is a difference of opinion whether these were free-standing pillars or part of the structure of the porch. The first seems most likely.

v. 23-40 A huge circular "Sea" (laver for the priests to wash themselves) was made of cast metal and rested on 12 bulls, 3 facing in each direction. "It held 2000 baths" (11,500 gallons). Ten smaller lavers were also fashioned to rest upon wagons with wheels so as to be portable. These were to wash the meat used for the sacrifices.

The chapter closes with a summary of the items fashioned by Hiram, the craftsman from Tyre. The list includes the temple furnishings (altar of incense; table for bread of the Presence; lampstands etc.). See

the powerpoint.

1 KINGS 8

The report of the dedication of the temple consists of three parts:

1. The ark and sacred vessels are brought into the temple. The LORD confirms his presence. Solomon acknowledges this with words of praise (v. 1-21)
2. Solomon's dedicatory prayer (v. 22-53)
3. Solomon's blessing of the congregation and the offering of sacrifices (v. 54-56)

(The parallel account in 2 Chr 6:2-7:10 agrees substantially.)

v. 1 The transfer of the ark was from Mount Zion in the City of David, where David had made a tent for it, to the temple on Mount Moriah (see 2 Sa 6:17).

The dedication took place at the Festival of Tabernacles in the fall. Note the archaic Canaanite month names. Since the temple was finished in the eighth month (6:38) the dedication apparently took place eleven months after the completion.

v. 8 "and they are still there today." The poles for carrying the ark were left there and were visible from within. The Mosaic precept regarding this was thereby observed (Ex 25:15).

Since, however, the temple was no longer standing when this was written, Keil explains the above statement as follows: "The author has retained this chronological allusion as he found it in his original sources" (Vol. 3, p. 92).

v. 9 "There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets." In Hebrews 9:4 we read that a pot of manna and Aaron's flowering staff were also in the ark. The Hebrews reference is possibly to an earlier time.

v. 11 "... for the glory of the LORD had filled his temple." This marvelous manifestation of God's august and gracious presence was a confirmation of this place as the LORD's very own place, like his appearance in the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement. This time, however, the cloud filled the entire temple.

v. 13 "... to dwell forever." Solomon well knew that all earthly things pass away. But the LORD would establish his throne for his seed forever, as he had promised David (2 Sa 7:14-16), and as Solomon here calls to remembrance. This interpretation is not forced, since in the following verse (15-21) Solomon praises God for having thus kept his gracious promise to David.

v. 22ff Solomon's Dedicatory Prayer can be divided into:

1. A general prayer for God's continued and constant presence (22-30)
2. Seven special petitions:
 - a. Concerning oaths sworn in the temple (31-32);
 - b. Deliverance from enemies who threaten the land (33-34);

- c. Deliverance in times of drought and calamity (35-36);
- d. Deliverance from other plagues, such as famine, pestilence etc. (37-40);
- e. Concerning devout foreigners who pray in the temple (41-43);
- f. (Note the missiological import: "... that all peoples of the earth may know your name.")
- g. In time of war directed by God (44-45);
- h. In time of captivity by the enemy (46-50).
(Does this last petition show prophetic insight into the Babylonian captivity? All the petitions of deliverance were from troubles Moses already prophesied would trouble God's people.)

v. 54-61 Solomon's closing words of blessing. Note the well-known words of v. 57: "May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us or forsake us."

v. 63ff Included as part of the dedicatory sacrifices were: **עֹלָה** and **מִנְחָה** and **זֶבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים**.

A total of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep were offered in seven days time. This would in a 12-hour day amount to 50 oxen and 250 sheep per minute! Although critics question this possibility, others argue just as convincingly that for 38,000 Levites assisted by 100,000 heads of households this was not at all an impossible task. Because of the large number of offerings not only the brazen altar was used, but "the king consecrated the middle part of the courtyard" (v. 64) for that purpose.

Note: this chapter contains a number of texts appropriate for dedicatory occasions.

Horace Hummel's comment is worth repeating: "In Old Testament theology, as in the piety and religion of Israel viewed more historically, the importance of the temple can scarcely be exaggerated ... For all practical purposes, David and the Messiah cannot be discussed apart from the temple and Zion, any more than Christ can be considered apart from His body, the church" (*The Word Becoming Flesh*, p. 138).

1 KINGS 9

v. 2 "The LORD appeared to him (Solomon) a second time." The first time was in Gibeon in a dream (ch. 3:5). In this appearance the LORD renews the gracious promise given to David, and at the same time repeats the threats against disobedience of his Law, reminding us of his threats to Moses in Deuteronomy 29:23-26.

v. 10 "At the end of twenty years ..." Here follows a condensed (when compared with 2 Chr 8) version of Solomon's building activities and other transactions.

One of these transactions was with Hiram, to whom Solomon gave "20 cities in the land of Galilee." No doubt this "gift" was payment for commodities and services from Hiram (v. 14). What right did Solomon have to surrender the inheritance of a tribe to a Canaanite king? Hiram, however, was displeased with this transaction and returned the cities to Solomon, calling them the "Land of Cabul," meaning "land which was pawned" or "good for nothing."

Other activities mentioned are the rebuilding of store cities with labor conscripted from conquered nations, the fulfillment of temple obligations at the three great festivals, and finally, with Hiram's cooperation, the construction of a fleet of ships which sailed from Ezion-geber on the east arm of the Red Sea (Reed Sea) to Ophir in order to bring back gold. Ophir's location is not known. Suggestions include South Arabia, the east coast of Africa, or even India (unlikely). Solomon traded in spices that originate in

India, but it is likely direct contacts with India remained in the control of the Queen of Sheba.

1 KINGS 10

v. 1-13 When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relation to the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions. Undoubtedly, commercial negotiations were also part of the mission. The queen controlled the Indian Ocean end of the pipeline, and Solomon controlled the Mediterranean outlet.

Sheba or Saba (Heb שָׁבָא; Greek Σαβα) is not Ethiopia, as claimed by Josephus, but the kingdom of the Sabaeans, who dwelt in south Arabia (Yemen). Their capital city was Saba. See the powerpoint.

The queen's purpose was to see if the reputation of Solomon's great wisdom were true, and she was evidently convinced. Christ refers to this visit of a heathen queen, who traveled over a thousand miles in order to find out more about Solomon's wisdom, while the "enlightened" Jews rejected one who was greater than Solomon and who was standing right before them (Mt 12:42).

v. 14-29 These verses give us a recapitulation of Solomon's wealth. Note v. 23: "King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth." Again the assembling of horses is referred to (v. 26), something forbidden by Moses (Dt 17:16).

This emphasis upon material wealth is closely followed in the following chapter by Solomon's permission of idolatry and indulgence in all kinds of sensual pleasures. The comparison with the situation in our country today is obvious.

1 KINGS 11

v. 1 "King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women ..." Great wisdom together with a head-knowledge of God are not a total barrier against the foolishness which rests within man's natural heart, particularly when the lusts of the flesh are involved. In chapter 9:25 we heard that Solomon continued to have Israel observe the major festivals of the year according to the Law of Moses. But in this chapter we see that this was no longer a total devotion (v. 4). Somehow in spite of all his vaunted wisdom Solomon imagined that he could tolerate idolatrous worship, build altars to the deities of his foreign wives, outdo the kings of other nations in sensuality within his own household, and even permit syncretism to go on without restrictions. The marriage to women from Canaanite and other nations, strictly forbidden in the Law of God (Dt 7:1-3; Ex 34:16), finally turned his heart after other gods.

v. 9-13 The LORD therefore appeared to Solomon once more, this time in anger. The LORD's message was both in judgment as well as in prophecy:

1. The kingdom would be torn out of the hand of his son;
2. One tribe would remain with the son in accordance with God's promise to David.

v. 14ff "Then the LORD raised up against Solomon an adversary ..." During Solomon's lifetime several adversaries greatly troubled him:

1. Hadad the Edomite. Under David the Edomites had been conquered. Hadad had fled to Egypt, there married the sister of Queen Tahpenes, the wife of Pharaoh. After David's death Hadad returned to trouble Israel.

2. Rezon son of Eliada from Zobah. David had defeated Hadadezer of Zobah, Rezon's master. After David's death Rezon struck out on his own, seized Damascus, and also troubled Solomon greatly.
3. Jeroboam. Solomon had made him overseer of the house of Joseph (v. 28). Jeroboam came into contact with Ahijah the prophet, who tore a garment into twelve pieces, giving ten to Jeroboam. (There is some question as to which tribes are involved in this 10/2 division. The tribe of Benjamin is in various places aligned with Judah. But what about Simeon, which earlier on had been virtually subsumed into Judah? And what do we do about the tribe of Levi? Most commentators agree that the 10/2 division is symbolic.)

v. 38 Jeroboam was promised "a dynasty" by Ahijah, but not a united kingdom. Jeroboam made a premature attempt at having this prophecy come true before Solomon's death, but was thwarted in the attempt and fled to Shishak of Egypt.

v. 41-43 Solomon's end is briefly reported. He died at a comparatively early age of 60, having ruled in Jerusalem 40 years.

Did he repent? Kings does not answer the question. Does Ecclesiastes? See Ecclesiastes: "All is vanity!"

v. 43 "And Rehoboam his son succeeded him as king." 931/30 B.C.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (1 Kgs 1-11)

1. Which period of history is covered by 1 and 2 Kings (bracket by events and dates)? What kind of influence did ALL the kings of the Northern Kingdom exert upon their people? How does this situation differ in the kingdom of Judah?
2. Into which chief parts can 1 and 2 Kings be divided? Give the dates for each part. How many dynastic changes took place in the Northern Kingdom? In Judah?
3. Between what years must we assume that both books of Kings were written? Upon what is this assumption based? What do these books show concerning God's dealings with his people?
4. Point out some of the chief differences between Kings and Chronicles.
5. What role do the following people play in Solomon's accession to the throne: Abishag; Adonijah; David; Bathsheba; Joab; Nathan; Abiathar.
6. Mention a number of the encouraging signs about Solomon's early reign. Give some disturbing reports.
7. Which verse in 1 Kings 6 is of special importance for biblical chronology? Explain why.
8. Give the general dimensions of Solomon's temple. Point out some of the differences between the temple and the tabernacle, listing some of the added features of the temple.
9. Which reports concerning the later years of Solomon's reign give strong evidence of deteriorating circumstances?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

From 1 Kings 8 select a text for church dedication. Provide a basic outline.

From the same chapter choose a text for missions, also formulating a basic outline.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE THE DIVIDED KINGDOM (1 Kgs 12-16)

1 KINGS 12

Drained by oppressive taxation as the result of the excessive luxury of Solomon, the northern tribes assembled at Shechem to seek relief from their tax burdens. Jeroboam, returned from exile in Egypt, served as their spokesman.

Spurning the wise counsel of the elders who had served Solomon and who now suggested that he comply with the request for relief, Rehoboam followed the advice of the young men. He gave a haughty and stubborn refusal, coupled with the threat that he would make the yoke even more severe: “My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions” (v. 11).

Rehoboam’s harsh treatment led to rebellion. “To your tents, O Israel! Look after your own house, O David!” was the cry (v. 16). After the crowd stoned Adoram, Rehoboam’s supervisor of forced labor, and threatened the king himself, the northern tribes revolted and made Jeroboam their king.

Raising an army of 180,000 out of Judah and Benjamin to compel the return of the rebellious tribes, Rehoboam was kept from carrying out his intentions by the prophet Shemaiah, who brought a word of the LORD vetoing the undertaking (v. 24).

In the background of all this we see the jealousy between Judah and Ephraim, the two most powerful tribes, coming to the fore once more. Jeroboam was an Ephraimite!

ISRAEL (N)

v. 25-33 Jeroboam made a number of moves which seemed wise from a human point of view. He chose Shechem as his capital city, the city between Ebal and Gerizim which had played such an important role in Israel’s covenant history. He built up and fortified Peniel, thus strengthening his forces east of the Jordan. He instituted a form of worship which would draw the people away from the city of Jerusalem, complete with a changed priesthood and religious calendar. The worship was centered in shrines for calf-worship, one set up in Bethel and the other in Dan. The calf-worship, of course, was reminiscent of the idolatry committed by the Israelites in the wilderness. As in that instance led by Aaron, the worship was intended to be worship of the LORD, but in a different form. But it was a heterodox, self-chosen form of worship that was not acceptable to the LORD. As such it was idolatry.

It did not take long before such worship spread to “high places” everywhere, developed into the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, and corrupted the morals of the people to the core.

1 KINGS 13

This chapter could be entitled: A good prophet and a bad prophet, but in the end both were a mixture of good and bad.

“A man of God ... from Judah” (v. 1) comes to Bethel to testify against the idolatry of Jeroboam, prophesying that some three centuries later “a son named Josiah” from the house of David would demolish the altar at Bethel! (2 Kgs 23:15-20).

When Jeroboam tries to seize this prophet of God, his hand shrivels and the altar is split apart, confirming

the LORD's prophecy with a sign (v. 4-5). Through the prophet's intercession the king's hand is restored.

Thereupon follows the strange story of "a certain old prophet living in Bethel" who seduces the prophet from Judah to break the command of the LORD. The Judean prophet tarried on the way, contrary to the LORD's command, and was devoured by a lion. The old prophet is so impressed by the sternness of God's judgment in this case that he asks to be buried in the grave of the Judean prophet, who had "declared the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel." (As an aftermath to this incident see 2 Kgs 23:15-20.)

Jeroboam, however, failed to be convinced by these stern warnings and went on to his doom.

1 KINGS 14

v. 1ff When Abijah, Jeroboam's son, became ill, he sent his wife to the prophet Ahijah, who had previously during Solomon's reign spoken to him encouragingly, (1 Kgs 11:29ff). Jeroboam's wife tried to disguise herself but failed.

v. 6ff Ahijah, recognizing the disguise, prophesies doom upon Jeroboam because of his idolatrous acts. In fact, as part of the prophecy the eventual destruction of the Northern Kingdom is declared.

v. 17 Jeroboam's son dies according to the prophecy. On the early death of the good to spare them from evil see Isaiah 57:1-2.

We are told that in the meantime the capital city had been moved to Tirzah. The reference to Samaria in v.32 is apparently an updating of the text, since the city Samaria was not yet built.

v. 19 Jeroboam dies after a reign of 22 years, succeeded by Nadab.

JUDAH (S)

v. 21ff According to 2 Chr 11 Rehoboam seems to have had a good beginning –following the Law, fortifying cities, setting in order domestic affairs, organizing the priests who also came from the northern tribes. This lasted 3 years. His entire rule was 17 years (2 Chr 11:5-17).

v. 22ff Judah, however, prostituted itself to the worship of idols. Shishak of Egypt invaded Judah, attacked Jerusalem, and carried off temple treasures.

v. 30 There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam!

v. 31 Rehoboam dies. Abijah succeeds him (cf. 2 Chr 12:12-16).

1 KINGS 15

v. 1ff Abijah (Abijam), son of Rehoboam and Maacah (Absalom's daughter) "reigned in Jerusalem three years." 2 Chr 13 gives us a somewhat more positive picture of Abijah's good beginning in his victory over Jeroboam. According to the record, of Kings Abijah was "not fully devoted to the LORD."

v. 4 "For David's sake the LORD his God gave him (Abijah) a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son to succeed him and by making Jerusalem strong" (1 Kgs 11:36).

v. 9ff Abijah's son Asa carried out a partial reform, including deposing his grandmother Maacah for her role in promoting idolatry. Typical of those who were "partly good" is the description: "He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD ... he did not remove the places" (v. 11 and v. 14). 2 Chronicles 15 provides more information about this reform.

Asa's victory against a large army led by Zerah the Cushite is recorded in 2 Chronicles 14.

Again there was war between Asa and Baasha, king of Israel (v. 16). In order to strengthen his position Asa made an alliance with Ben-Hadad, king of Aram in Damascus, in effect hiring him to attack Israel. According to 2 Chronicles 16 this reliance on treaties with a foreign power rather than on the LORD led to his downfall.

Asa died of "diseased feet" after a long rule of 41 years and was succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat.

ISRAEL (N)

v. 25-26 Nadab, Jeroboam's son, reigned only two years.

v. 27ff Baasha, of the tribe of Issachar, perpetrated the first of the many bloody coups which took place in the northern kingdom. He destroyed Jeroboam's entire family in the process, fulfilling Ahijah's prophecy (cf. 1 Kgs 14:10-11). Baasha ruled 24 years.

1 KINGS 16

v. 1-7 The LORD's prophet Jehu (not to be confused with the later king of Israel) is sent to proclaim destruction upon the house of Baasha because of his evil ways. Baasha's son Elah is included in this announcement of doom.

v. 8-14 Elah, son of Baasha, rules in Tirzah 2 years. While in a drunken stupor he is killed in another bloody coup, this time led by an army official named Zimri. The entire family of Baasha is killed, according to Jehu's prophecy. Elah's reign is 2 years.

v. 15-20 Zimri, who attempted to establish a new dynasty, is disposed of by another army takeover led by Omri. During the process Zimri sets fire to his palace in Tirzah and perishes in the holocaust. Zimri lasted only 7 days!

v. 21-28 Omri disposes of another army faction led by Tibni (though not until Tibni has ruled some years as a rival king) and establishes in the city of Samaria a new dynasty, one which becomes more stable. He rules 12 years. During his reign Israel was outwardly prosperous, but in the eyes of the LORD he "sinned more than all those before him." According to Assyrian sources Omri was one of Israel's ablest kings. The prophetic writer, however, disposes of his reign in eight verses.

v. 29-33 Ahab, son of Omri, "reigned in Samaria 22 years." During his reign Israel's idolatry was no longer just a matter of syncretism. It was open, gross idolatry, the worship of Baal and Asherah. A temple of Baal was built in Samaria and an Asherah pole set up. This evil was greatly encouraged by Ahab's Sidonian wife Jezebel.

The clash between Ahab and the prophet Elijah, who arises on the scene in the next chapter, is reported in detail in the next six chapters of 1 Kings.

v. 33 When Hiel during Ahab's time attempts to refortify the city of Jericho, his sons die according to

the prophecy recorded in Joshua 6:26.

With the reign of Ahab and his defiance of the LORD the history of Israel becomes a matter of open conflict between Yahweh and Baal. The story of the kings therefore gives way to the story of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Since this conflict took place primarily in the Northern Kingdom, the history of Judah for the time being falls into the background.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (1 Kgs 12-16)

1. Explain the immediate circumstances which brought about the division of the kingdom after Solomon's death.
2. From Jeroboam's standpoint, which "wise" moves did he make to strengthen his position? What was, however, the great sin of Jeroboam?
3. Describe the situation in which the LORD warned Jeroboam concerning his downfall? Which king of Judah would be involved in this?
4. Read 2 Kgs 23:15-20.
 - a. How did Josiah fulfill the prophecy of "the man of God from Judah" (v.15)?
 - b. Why was the grave of the "man of God" spared (v. 17-18)? How was it that this "man of God" happened to have been buried at that place?
5. Was it fair for the LORD to judge the prophet from Judah since he had been told that it was God's will that he stay for a meal?
6. In what way did Jeroboam seek help from the prophet Ahijah? What was the result of this effort?
7. Describe Rehoboam's "ways" and their results.
8. Which of Rehoboam's successors carried on a religious reform? Why was this reform not entirely successful? What lack of trust did this successor show in the latter part of his reign?
9. Give the names of three kings who began or attempted to begin new dynasties in the Northern Kingdom? What changes were also made in the location of the capital city? What kind of conditions do these changes reveal?
10. What further deterioration took place under Ahab and Jezebel?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

The following pattern is characteristic of the reports of kings in Scripture, with a difference between the Northern Kingdom and Judah as follows:

	NORTH	JUDAH
1.	Length of reign	Length of reign
2.	Royal Residence: Shechem/Tirzah/ Samaria	Royal Residence always Jerusalem
3.	Name of father	Name of mother
4.	Each king formally condemned	Each king evaluated
5.	Source of information	Source of information.
6.		Statement of king's death

The kings of the divided kingdom are listed below, with a brief summary of their activities. These are the kings mentioned in 1 Kings 12-22. Names underlined indicate a dynastic change. Learn the list of names of kings and prophets recorded so far.

Ch	ISRAEL	JUDAH
12	<u>Jeroboam</u> – 22 yrs. SHECHEM. Calf worship Prophet Ahijah <u>Nadab</u> – 2 yrs. Like father	<u>Rehoboam</u> – 17 yrs. Autocratic, weak Shishak of Egypt attacks. <u>Abijah</u> – 3 yrs. Evil influence of Maacah
15	<u>Baasha</u> – 24 yrs. Kills Jeroboam's family. TIRZAH. Prophet Jehu.	<u>Asa</u> – 41 yrs. Partial reform. Alliance with Ben Hadad of Aram.
16	<u>Elah</u> – 2 yrs. Killed while drunk. <u>Zimri</u> – 7 days. Military coup. Kills Baasha's family. (Tibni) <u>Omri</u> – 12 yrs. SAMARIA. Military coup. Establishes strong dynasty	
22	<u>Ahab</u> and <u>Jezebel</u> – 22 yrs. Baal, Asherah Prophets Elijah and Micaiah. Killed in battle vs. Aram. <u>Ahaziah</u> – 2 yrs. Dies according to prophecy	<u>Jehoshaphat</u> – 25 years. Partial reform. Vs. Ben Hadad with Ahab

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX ELIJAH AND AHAB (1 Kgs 17-22)

1 KINGS 17

In chapter 17 Elijah the Tishbite is abruptly introduced into the situation, somewhat on the order of John the Baptist. As we follow his story, we see how God equips both Elijah and his successor Elisha with special signs and wonders. This is the God of the covenant, vigorously intervening into the affairs of Israel. The signs and miracles are characterized by such vehemence and are at times of such an unusual nature because the apostasy is so grave and persistent. The prophets of God in addition to bringing his message were equipped with external powers also because there was no regular functioning Levitical priesthood.

v. 1-5 Elijah brings the stern announcement of a terrible drought, a most appropriate way for the true God of Israel to show his power to a king who believes in Baal a god of rain and fertility! According to Luke 4:25 the drought lasted 3½ years.

Elijah spends the next period of time in seclusion, at the ravine of Kerith near the Jordan River, where he is fed by ravens. What a mighty way for the LORD to demonstrate his power by feeding his servant through the most ravenous of creatures!

v. 7-24 The story of the widow of Zarephath demonstrates the LORD's power to Elijah also in various ways:

1. If even this heathen woman from the territory of Jezebel can be brought to faith, how can Elijah's ministry among Israel be in vain, no matter how deeply the nation has fallen. See Luke 4:24-27.
2. God surely answers prayer in time of crisis and when everything seems to be going wrong. In this case even a dead child was restored to life.

Thus prepared and strengthened, Elijah is prepared for a climactic confrontation with the enemy!

1 KINGS 18

v. 3 "Ahab had summoned Obadiah." This is obviously not the author of the book of Obadiah, who was a prophet in Judah. This Obadiah was a God-fearing man, indicating that there were still such to be found in Israel.

v. 19 "Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel." This beautiful mountain was regarded by many superstitiously to be a dwelling place of the gods. Elijah chose well for the mighty confrontation between himself and the 450 Baal prophets. Execution of the prophets of Baal was obedience to Deuteronomy 13.

The story is one of the most dramatic in all of Scripture. Mendelssohn has captured the tone of it well in his "Elijah" oratorio. Equally dramatic is the way in which the drought comes to an end with rain out of season. Elijah's run is some 17 miles. See James 5:17 for application.

1 KINGS 19

This chapter could be entitled “Elijah’s Inner Conflicts.”

Instead of tremendous success after his Mount Carmel victory, Elijah is confronted with a threat to his life from Jezebel, the “power behind the throne” (v. 1-2).

He flees to the Negev, where he asks God to take his life. Instead, he is refreshed by an angel (v. 3-7).

He travels to Horeb, where he spends the night in a cave. Here he pours out his despair to the LORD: “I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too” (v. 8-10).

Great men of God have had their moments of doubt. Their own zeal does not seem to be winning the battle! Their best efforts seem to end in failure. “Why not put an end to this losing battle, LORD!”

The LORD replies with three manifestations to begin with:

1. A powerful wind — but the LORD was not in the wind.
2. An earthquake — but the LORD was not in the earthquake.
3. A fire — but the LORD was not in the fire.

Finally the LORD comes in “a gentle whisper” (lit. a “sound of gentle silence”). What message was the LORD trying to impress upon his servant? In the circumstances Elijah had to know that the LORD does not manifest his greatest powers in the destructive forces of nature. Not, in other words, with destroying severity of judgment (LAW). Rather in the gentleness of his mercy and grace (GOSPEL) (v. 11-13). The progress of the gospel is not to be measured by external criteria!

Having thus revealed himself, the LORD gives Elijah a threefold commission:

1. To anoint Hazael king over Syria (2 Kgs 8:7-15).
2. To anoint Jehu as the next king of Israel (2 Kgs 9:1-10).
3. To appoint Elisha the son of Shaphat as his successor.

The chapter closes with the carrying out of the third commission (v. 19-21). The other two were carried out also, but by Elisha and Elisha’s servant.

1 KINGS 20

Ben-Hadad (II?), king of Aram, lays siege to Samaria. After some indecision Ahab decides to resist. A prophet announces that the LORD will give Ahab the victory. With a decidedly smaller force Ahab wins a mighty victory, not once, but two times. Victorious Ahab, however, fails to carry out the LORD’s will that the enemy be completely destroyed and spares Ben-Hadad.

One of the sons of the prophets, in disguise as a wounded soldier, asks Ahab what should happen to him since he promised to guard a man with his life but carelessly let the man escape. Ahab declares that he must pay for his carelessness with his own life. The prophet then turns the judgment of Ahab upon himself. He, too, set a man free whom the LORD determined should die. “Therefore it is your life for his life, your people for his people.” By means of symbolic action, in other words, the prophet lets Ahab pronounce his own sentence upon himself.

This chapter shows us how Ahab continued to spurn the LORD’s blessings and would therefore bring judgment upon himself.

1 KINGS 21

The well-known story of Naboth's vineyard. Hummel says of it: "Nowhere is the infinite gulf between the two worlds of Israel and Canaan, Yahweh and Baal, better illustrated than in the famous story of Naboth's vineyard" (*The Word Becoming Flesh*, p. 141).

The LORD's prophecy of doom upon Ahab and Jezebel, communicated through Elijah, was literally fulfilled – See 1 Kgs 23:27; 2 Kgs 9:25; 30-37 for the completion of the story.

1 KINGS 22

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, allies himself with Ahab to fight against the king of Aram. The purpose is to regain Ramoth Gilead in the territory east of Jordan.

Of interest as this matter progresses is the contrast between Ahab's "kept" prophets, who tell him what he wants to hear, and Micaiah son of Imlah, a true prophet. Jehoshaphat, a God-fearing king, insists on hearing what the true prophet has to say. Micaiah's first reply is sarcastic: "The LORD will give it into the king's hand" (v 15)—a mocking imitation of the hired prophets. Ahab senses the irony. Thereupon Micaiah announces the truth, i.e. that "all Israel will be scattered" (v. 17). Micaiah adds by way of a vision from the LORD a reiteration of the prophecy of disaster together with a strong denunciation of lying prophecy.

Ahab enters the battle in disguise. A random shot kills him. As his chariot is washed in a pool where prostitutes bathed, the dogs lick up his blood, in fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy (ch. 21:9).

1 Kings closes with a brief resume' of the rule of Jehoshaphat of Judah, who reigned 25 years, "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD," yet was not able to stamp out idolatry fully ... Ahaziah succeeds Ahab and continues to follow the evil course set by his father and mother.

Thus the book of 1 Kings closes with a presentation of two kings, one from each part of the divided kingdom, who are somewhat characteristic of the type of rule in each part.

2 Kings quickly takes up the story from this point, beginning with Ahaziah and concentrating once more on the activities of the prophets Elijah and Elisha in the Northern Kingdom.

There is a much fuller description of the rule of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 17-21. He had much military success and carried out many reforms. His besetting weakness was cooperation with the ungodly house of Omri. Inter-marriage with that house will lead to disaster for Israel.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (1 Kgs 17-22)

1. Compare the ministry of Elijah with that of John the Baptist. Why was his announcement of a severe drought a blow against Baal?
2. By what miracles was Elijah strengthened during his time of preparation?
3. Why is his experience in a place like Zarephath especially unusual?
4. Ahab identifies Elijah as the "troubler of Israel" (18:16). How is this echoed in subsequent church history?

5. Describe the great confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal and the suspenseful end to the drought.
6. What factors must have brought on Elijah's fear and depression? Relate this experience to similar conflicts for God's servants.
7. Relate the LORD's way of dispelling Elijah's inner conflicts. What important lesson lies in this for us today?
8. What threefold commission did Elijah receive? Which of these did Elijah personally carry out?
9. Why was Ahab deserving of the LORD's censure after his victories over Ben-hadad? How was this message of censure conveyed to him?
10. Show how both Ahab and Jezebel demonstrated complete defiance of God's commandments in the story of Naboth's vineyard. What judgment was pronounced upon them for this?
11. With whom was Ahab allied in his battle against Aram? How does this show a change in the relationship between the two kingdoms?
12. Contrast the prophecy of Micaiah with that of Ahab's "prophets". How was Micaiah's prophecy fulfilled?
13. With which two kings is First Kings brought to a close? Contrast their rule.

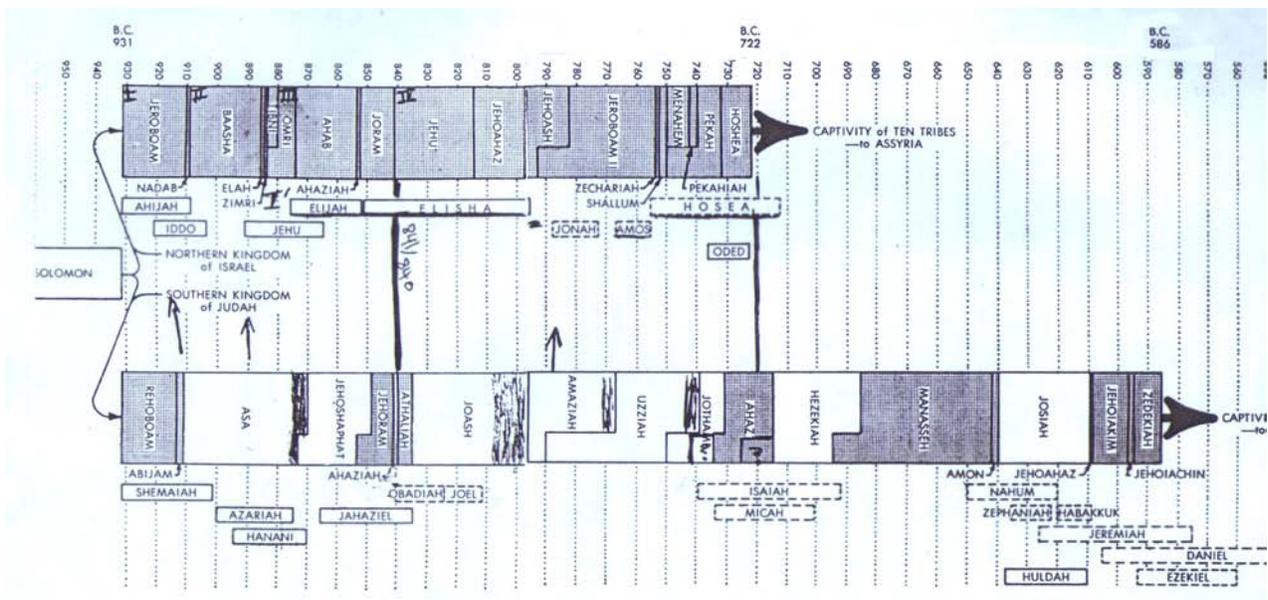
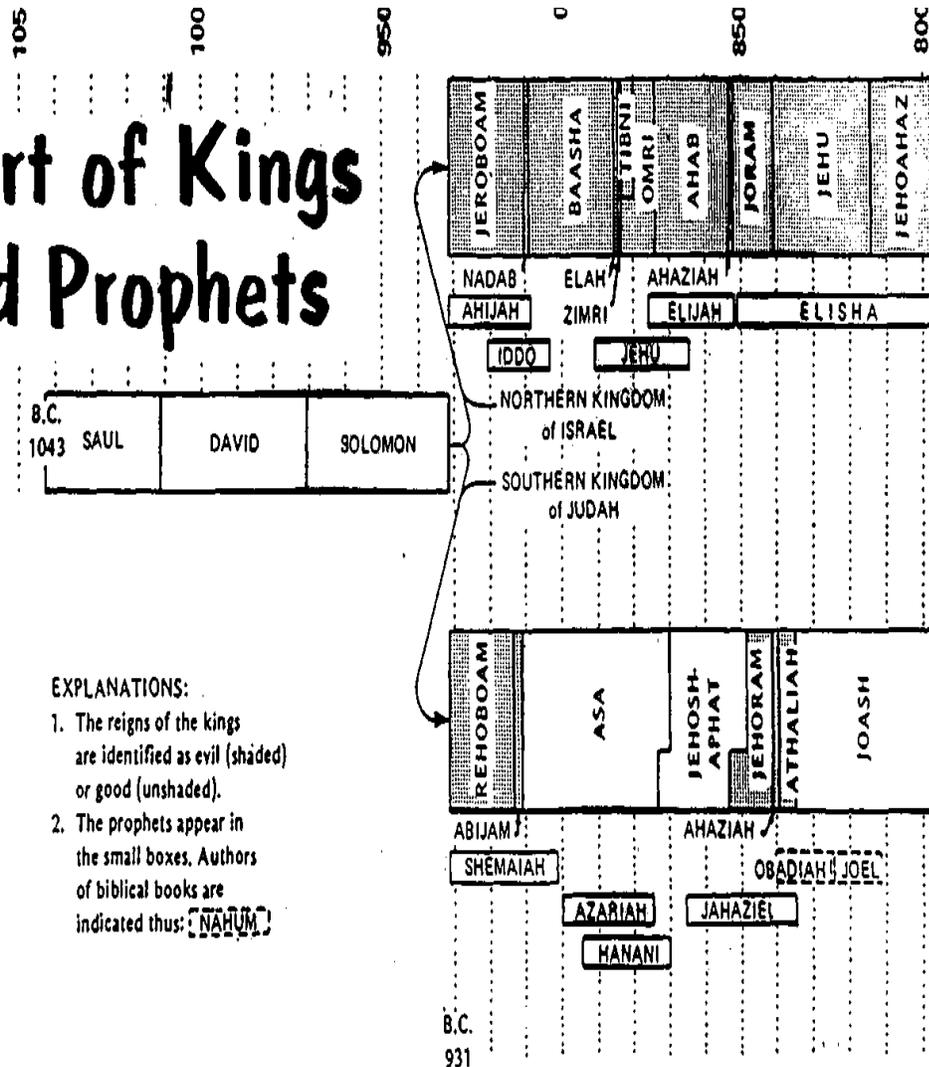


Chart of Kings and Prophets



CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN ELIJAH'S ASCENSION; ELISHA (2 Kings 1-10)

In the northern kingdom of Israel the conditions that had been attached to the promise of rule given to Jeroboam had not been fulfilled from the very beginning. As a result, as we have seen, one dynasty is dethroned after another. After the dynasty of Jeroboam other dynasties were begun by Baasha, Zimri, and Omri. In almost every case the founding of a new dynasty meant another bloodbath. Ahab and Ahaziah, with whom First Kings comes to a close, were of the Omride dynasty.

Thus Second Kings begins where First Kings left off, namely with the rule of Ahab's invalid son Ahaziah, who follows in the ways of his father and who is still under the evil influence of his mother Jezebel.

The opening chapters of Second Kings also continue the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. Particularly in the case of the latter prophet, the miraculous element plays a predominating role. Critics are quick to point out that these miracles have their origin in “legends” which held up their hero as more of a village medicine man than a theological leader. We see these miracle stories, however, as God’s vigorous way of intervening in history at a time when this manner of dealing with mankind was necessary in order to carry out his plan. We note the striking similarity, for example, between the miracles of Elisha and those of Christ — raising the dead, multiplying food, controlling the forces of nature etc. In the case of Jesus, of course, the miracles were accomplished by his own power as true God in order to emphasize his divine authority as God-man. In the case of Elisha God also intervened dramatically in the lives of people to demonstrate his power through the works of his chosen prophet.

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2 KINGS 1

v. 1 ff Ahaziah, Ahab’s injured son who is now king, seeks help from Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see if he can recover from his injury.

Baal, whose name is a common noun meaning “LORD,” was a rain god worshipped under various names in various local manifestations. Baal-Berith, the LORD of the covenant; Baal-Peor, LORD of Peor, the Moabite god of wrath who demanded the sacrifice of infants; Baal-Zebub, the “LORD of flies” of Ekron who was turned to for powers of healing. It is uncertain if Zebub is the original name of the god or a derogatory corruption like *bosheth*, “shame,” which is sometimes substituted for *baal*. At Ugarit Baal was worshipped as Baal Zebul, “LORD of the palace.”

v. 3 ff The angel of the LORD intervenes, sending Elijah to intercept Ahaziah’s delegation and ask why they seek help from an idol instead of from the true God. Elijah is recognized by his garment, “a garment of hair and a leather belt around his waist” (v. 8).

v. 9 ff By means of a stern warning, fire from heaven, the LORD through Elijah tries to turn Ahaziah away from his idolatry. The king, however, refuses to heed the warning, and after Elijah’s personal announcement he meets his death (v. 17). See the New Testament counterpart in Luke 9:51-56.

v. 17 Since Ahaziah has no son to succeed him, Joram, another son of Ahab, becomes king. It is during Joram’s reign, which later ends tragically, that Elijah ascends to heaven. Elisha succeeds him and performs many miracles.

2 KINGS 2

This chapter brings the well-known story of Elijah’s ascent into heaven. The story is told in simple style and is part of every Old Testament Bible story series.

The place of Elijah’s ascent was east of Jordan, possibly in the direction of Nebo, where Moses died. Prior to its occurrence both Elijah and Elisha met with companies of prophets at Bethel and at Jericho. It was important that these schools of the prophets be strengthened by the events soon to take place.

v. 9 “Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit.” This request of Elisha has been variously interpreted. Rather than the meaning “twice as much power” as some, including Luther, explain, the context indicates that Elisha is simply asking for the privilege of being regarded as Elijah’s firstborn (Dt 21:17), his heir and the leader in the ministry of the prophets.

v. 11 The ascension itself is presented as the sudden appearance of a chariot of fire and horses and Elijah's ascent "in a whirlwind." Attempts to explain this further result in probing into a mystery which is beyond human comprehension.

The purpose of this ascension, as in the case of Christ's own transfiguration and ascension, is to strengthen believers in their faith in the reality of heaven.

Elisha's leadership as prophetic leader is confirmed by three miracles:

1. Parting the Jordan River with Elijah's mantle in full sight of the prophets from Jericho (v. 14-15).
2. Restoring purity to the water of Jericho with a dish of salt (v. 19-22).
3. Calling down a curse in the LORD's name upon the 42 youths of Bethel who mock him. Some people seem to be offended by the severity of judgment in this case. We remember, however, several things in this connection:
 - a. This occurred in Bethel, a seat of idolatry as well as the location of a prophetic school.
 - b. The words of mockery ("Go on up, you baldhead!") not only mocked Elisha as a person, but everything for which he stood. It may also be mocking Elijah's ascent.

The NIV seems to be trying to soften the judgment by referring to the perpetrators as "youths" in both instances. This could include teenagers or even young men in their twenties but the text characterizes them as **נְעָרִים קְטַנִּים** "little youths" and **יְלָדִים**, "children."

Stern measures were indicated! Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

2 KINGS 3

After Ahab's death Mesha, king of Moab, rebels, refusing to pay tribute. Joram, Ahab's son, organizes a plan whereby he together with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and the king of Edom march against the Moabites. Faced with disaster in the wilderness because of lack of water, they appeal to Elisha who is with the armies at the time. The LORD through Elisha, whose prophesying is accompanied by a harpist, miraculously provides water.

The Moabites are roundly defeated and pursued to their capital city, where king Mesha offers his own son as a sacrifice on the city wall! Seeing this, the armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom withdraw. A bizarre turn of events!

Mesha's account of this war with Israel appears on the Moabite Stone.

2 KINGS 4

In this chapter we have five miracles of Elisha. They are not as well known as others, but they give evidence of the LORD's way of intervening in the lives of his people to keep his presence before them through his chosen prophet. They are:

v. 1-7 Multiplying the supply of oil for a widow of one of the prophets so that she can pay off her creditors.

v. 8-17 Granting the desire of a Shunamite woman who has befriended Elisha so that she becomes pregnant, even though her husband is old.

v. 18-37 Restoring to life this son who is born to the Shunamite woman but who dies of a sunstroke. Note the words of the woman to Elisha when she sees the prophet coming: “Everything is all right.” Even though her son is dead, she has hope that the prophet of the LORD will set things right. An effective funeral text for the death of a child!

v. 38-41 Purifying some stew made from a wild vine by adding some flour to the pot. Done again in behalf of a company of prophets.

v. 42-43 Feeding 100 men with 20 barley loaves.

Negative critics as well as doubters in general take offense at the unusual nature of these miracles of Elisha. This is to be expected. The deeds are either to be accepted in faith as miracles, one heaped upon the other, or they are to be rejected by unbelief, which simply cannot accept the existence of the supernatural. There is no middle ground. There is no human explanation. Their unusual nature does not offend the believer, however. He is rather strengthened in the conviction that all depends upon the blessing of an almighty God, who demonstrates his power in the highest sense when performing that which human reason cannot grasp. We walk by faith, not by sight!

A similar collection of miracles is presented in Matthew 8 and 9.

2 KINGS 5

The story of how Naaman is healed by leprosy is familiar. Chronologically this story fits after chapter 8, but is placed here together with other miracle stories.

v. 2-3 The witness of the Israelite slave girl in a foreign land is evidence for the effectiveness of the courageous testimony of children.

v. 17-19 Naaman will be practicing his new faith as an office holder in a heathen regime (like Joseph, Daniel and his friends). Though he may be present at heathen rites, he will not be worshipping their gods.

v. 19-27 Gehazi’s mercenary spirit bring judgment on him.

2 KINGS 6

v. 1-7 Elisha causes a lost ax-head to float for one of the company of prophets. The prophets are in the process of building a meeting place.

An insignificant event, too trivial to deserve a place in Scripture? Not at all! An excellent text for building a place in which to serve the LORD. God cares for little things when done in his name.

v. 8-23 Elisha, pursued by the king of Aram, is surrounded in the city of Dothan, 12 miles north of Samaria, by the king’s army. Here Elisha opens the eyes of his servant so that he can see the LORD’s protecting hosts of angels surrounding the hills round about them. The LORD strikes the enemy with blindness and leads them away to Samaria, where they are mercifully spared.

God protects his messengers in every danger! His angel hosts surround us, even though we cannot see them with our natural sight. We can see them with the eyes of faith.

v. 24 ff A terrible famine comes to Samaria as the city is besieged by the Aramean army. Even

cannibalism is practiced to obtain food. This was foretold in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. King Joram blames Elisha.

2 KINGS 7

Elisha prophesies that the siege of the Arameans against Samaria will be lifted, but tells the captain of the king's army that although he will see the relief of food, he "will not eat any of it."

Through four lepers who wander away it is discovered that the army of the Arameans has fled, the LORD having caused the flight by the sound of a great army. The Arameans left in such a hurry that all their supplies remained. When this report reaches Samaria, there is such a rush for it that the captain of Joram's army is trampled to death, fulfilling to Elisha's prophecy.

2 KINGS 8

v. 1-6 This story concerns the Shunamite woman already mentioned in chapter 4, Gehazi the servant of Elisha, a king of Israel (perhaps Joram of Israel although not mentioned by name), and a seven-year famine. Although the king showed respect for Elisha, he did not forsake his sins.

v. 7-15 We recall that Elijah had received instructions on Horeb concerning the fact that Hazael was to become king of Aram. This directive of the LORD is now carried out on a visit of Elisha to Damascus when king Ben-Hadad is ill. Hazael, the king's servant, comes with gifts, inquiring what the fate of his master is to be. Elisha gives the message that Ben-Hadad will recover from his illness, but that he will in fact die. This seems like a contradictory message. It is, however, fulfilled. Ben-hadad does recover, but his life is then violently snuffed out by Hazael, who cold-bloodedly takes a water-soaked cloth and suffocates the king with it. Hazael then succeeds as king of Aram.

One wonders, perhaps, what a man of God like Elijah should have to do with someone from a heathen nation becoming king. Subsequent history, however, shows that God had much to do with this turn of events. He used Hazael, a cold-blooded scoundrel, as a scourge upon his people Israel because of their persistent disobedience.

JUDAH

v. 16 ff The scene now shifts to the kingdom of Judah, where Jehoram succeeds Jehoshaphat. Jehoram had married Athaliah, a daughter of Ahab, who succeeded in getting him to walk in Ahab's ways. Jehoram's reign lasted 8 years.

Under Jehoram both Edom and Libnah successfully revolted, and there were incursions of Philistines and Arabs (2 Chr 21). Chronicles also reports a letter of rebuke that Jehoram received from Elijah (this suggests that the stories of Elijah and Elisha in Kings are not all in chronological order). According to 2 Chronicles 21:18ff Jehoram died of a terrible disease of the bowels.

Note: Joram and Jehoram are variant forms of the same name. Both the kings of Israel and Judah bear both of these names, but the NIV tries to create a distinction.

Jehoram is succeeded by Ahaziah, who continues to be influenced by the evil ways of his mother Athaliah, but after a reign of only one year dies as a result of the coup of Jehu in the Northern Kingdom. We see how the kingdom of Judah becomes involved in the godless affairs of the kingdom of Israel, to a great extent through intermarriage, and suffers the consequences.

2 KINGS 9 and 10

ISRAEL

Another directive of the LORD to Elijah is carried out in the anointing of Jehu as king of Israel (see 1 Kgs 19:15). Again the order is fulfilled not by Elijah himself, but via Elisha via Elisha's servant, also one of the company of the prophets. Jehu is anointed while serving as captain of Israel's army in Ramoth Gilead.

In the succeeding turmoil Joram, King of Israel, is murdered by Jehu while recuperating from wounds suffered in his war against the Arameans. King Ahaziah of Judah who was visiting Joram at the time is also killed as he tries to escape. Jezebel dies a gruesome death, and her flesh is eaten by dogs.

Jehu follows up on the bloody massacre by having the 70 sons of Ahab killed, and their heads brought to him in a basket! Forty-two relatives of Ahaziah, King of Judah, are killed as well. Jehu exterminates the prophets of Baal and destroys their temple, but maintains the calf-worship of Jeroboam. Jehu rules over Israel for 28 years, but during his reign Hazael takes over all of Israel's territory east of the Jordan.

With Jehu begins another dynasty, one which includes Jehoahaz, Jehoash, and Jeroboam II. These are really the last "days of grace" for Israel before the final judgment of the LORD comes upon them. Jehu is an instrument of God, anointed by God's direction to scourge a rebellious Israel, yet he fails to restore true worship, and his kingdom suffers great losses from the Syrians under Hazael.

Even though Israel enjoys a measure of outward success for a time under this dynasty, it continues to deteriorate inwardly, as we see especially from the writings of the prophets like Hosea and Amos, who cry out against the debauchery and oppression of the poor and the godlessness during these days.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (2 Kgs 1-10)

1. Why did God work through his prophets Elijah and Elisha in such a dramatic way at this time?
2. What events led up to Elijah's ascension into heaven? What was, therefore, the blessed fruit of this ascension? What meaning does this also hold for us today?
3. Which kings of Israel and Judah formed an alliance? Why? Describe the unusual end of their campaign.
4. List a number of miracles performed by Elisha. Choose one or the other of these miracle stories as a text for an occasional sermon and explain how you would apply it.
5. What purpose did Hazael, king of Aram, serve under God's plan?
6. In what way did the evil influence of Ahab and Jezebel have a continuing effect upon two kings of Judah? Who were they?
7. Give your evaluation of Jehu — his purpose under God, his character as reflected in the events of his life, the results of his rule in terms of Israel's power.
8. What becomes more and more apparent in the history of the Northern Kingdom as it approaches its end?
9. Which kings of Judah during this same period "did what was right"? Which added words, however,

qualify the effectiveness of their rule under God?

FOR ADDED CONSIDERATION

The following texts out of the lives of Elijah and Elisha suggest themselves for sermon use:

ELIJAH

TEXT

STORY

1 Kgs 17:1-7

Fed by Ravens

1 Kgs 17:10-16

The Widow at Zarephath

1 Kgs 17:17-24

The Widow's Son Restored

1 Kgs 18:16-40

Elijah on Mount Carmel

1 Kgs 18:41-46

The Drought Ends

1 Kgs 19:1-8

Elijah Flees to Horeb

1 Kgs 19:8-18

Elijah's Inner Conflicts

1 Kgs 21:1-29

Naboth's Vineyard

2 Kgs 2:1-12

Elijah's Ascent into Heaven

ELISHAH

TEXT

STORY

2 Kgs 2:23-25

Elisha and the Youths at Bethel

2 Kgs 4:1-7

The Widow's Oil

2 Kgs 4:8-36

The Shunammite's Son Restored

2 Kgs 4:38-40

Death in the Pot

2 Kgs 4:42-44

Feeding of a Hundred

2 Kgs 5:1-6

The Witness of a Captive Girl

2 Kgs 5:9-14

Naaman Healed of Leprosy

2 Kgs 6:1-7

An Axhead Floats

2 Kgs 6:8-22

Elisha's Servant Sees Chariots of Fire

Choose a text from one of these stories and prepare a basic outline, indicating also how you want to apply this in a sermon.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

THE END OF NORTHERN ISRAEL (2 Kgs 11-17)

2 KINGS 11

JUDAH (Athaliah - Joash)

The evils of Ahab and Jezebel lived on through Athaliah, their (?) daughter, who had married Jehoram of Judah, son of Jehoshaphat, and thus influenced also the affairs of the Southern Kingdom. After Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram and Athaliah was killed by Jehu, Athaliah took over the Southern Kingdom as Queen Regent for a period of 6 years. She almost succeeded in eliminating all remaining members of the royal family.

Ahaziah's infant son Joash, however, escaped the massacre when he was rescued by his aunt Josheba. He remained in the custody of the priest Jehoiada until a counterrevolution succeeded in disposing of the wicked Athaliah and placed Joash on the throne.

2 KINGS 12

Joash had a long rule of 40 years, after beginning his reign at age seven. He succeeded in raising a building fund (Joash Chest) in order to repair and rebuild the temple. When attacked by Hazael of Aram, however, he became tributary to Hazael and was assassinated by his own officials.

Chronicles 24 tells more about his wicked actions in his later years, including the murder of Zechariah, son of Jehoida.

Joash and Jehoash are another pair of names shared by kings in both Israel and Judah.

2 KINGS 13

ISRAEL (Jehoahaz, Jehoash)

Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, ruled 17 years over the Northern Kingdom. He was oppressed by Hazael of Aram and his son Ben-Hadad. For a time he seemed to "seek the LORD's favor," but turned back to the evil ways of the house of Jeroboam. His decimated army of 50 horsemen and 10 chariots (!) indicates how powerless he was.

Jehoash succeeded Jehoahaz in Samaria and reigned 16 years. He fought successfully against Amaziah of Judah and the Arameans.

In connection with Jehoash's reign, the death of Elisha is reported many years after the last mention we had of him. Seeking help from Elisha the king was instructed to shoot an arrow eastward, and to strike the ground. Jehoash struck the ground only three times, indicating that he would defeat Aram but three times. Elisha's death is then reported, together with the miraculous resurrection of a body which was thrown into Elisha's tomb.

2 KINGS 14

JUDAH (Amaziah)

In chapter 14 the scene shifts to the Southern Kingdom, where Amaziah begins a conditionally “good” rule. He defeated the Edomites.

When arrogantly challenging Jehoash, however, Amaziah was roundly defeated. He apparently was held prisoner for some time while his son ruled in his place. After a rule of 29 years he was killed in a conspiracy.

ISRAEL (Jeroboam II)

Jeroboam II, son of Jehoash, succeeded in the Northern Kingdom. Although an evil king he was successful in restoring Israel’s boundaries both far to the north and to the south. It was at this time that the mission of Jonah to Nineveh took place (2 Kgs 14:25).

2 KINGS 15

JUDAH (Azariah)

Azariah, son of Amaziah, ruled conditionally well at first. He is also known as Uzziah (2 Kgs 15:32; Is 1:1). According to 2 Chronicles 26:17ff he tried, however, to usurp the position of a priest and was smitten with leprosy. The latter part of his 52 year reign was a co-regency with his son Jotham.

ISRAEL (Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah)

In Israel to the north we have the final period of deterioration before the end. Zechariah, son of Jeroboam II, ruled only 6 months. He was the last of Jehu’s dynasty (confer. v 12). He was assassinated by Shallum, who ruled in Samaria one month before he was assassinated by Menahem. Although his rule extended over 10 years, Menahem was made tributary to Assyria under Tiglath-Pileser. His son Pekahiah reigned 2 years before being ousted by an army coup led by Pekah. Assyria again invaded Israel and we have the first deportation of the north carried on by Tiglath-Pileser.

Four of these five kings were assassinated.

JUDAH (Jotham, Ahaz)

Jotham of Judah was a basically good king. He had some success as a builder and warrior, especially against the Ammonites (2 Chr 27).

2 KINGS 16

Meanwhile in the south Ahaz succeeded Jotham, beginning a time of great apostasy in Jerusalem. He even sacrificed his son after the manner of the Canaanites. He became the vassal of Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria, even giving the worship of an Assyrian idol a place in the temple at Jerusalem. Ahaz ruled 16 years.

He is a candidate for worst king of Judah, and he was the nemesis of Isaiah. The sign of the Virgin (Is 7) was given as testimony against him.

2 KINGS 17

ISRAEL (Hoshea)

With this miserable king the Northern Kingdom of Israel came to an end. Hoping to revolt against Assyria through making a treaty with Egypt, he was besieged by Shalmaneser, who devastated the land and put an end to his rule of 9 years.

The rest of the chapter provides us with a theological explanation of the downfall of the Northern Kingdom:

- v. 7-17 The idolatrous ways of Israel are reviewed in detail.
- v. 18-32 The LORD's just anger, leading to the disappearance of the Northern Kingdom, is described.
- v. 24-41 The resettlement of Samaria is outlined.

In order to break the spirit of nationalism the king of Assyria deported the leadership and resettled the land with captives from other parts of the empire (compare the Soviet policy). These population shifts continued into the rule of Esarhaddon (confer Ezra 4:2). The colonists intermingled with whatever Israelites remained, giving rise to a mixed people (Samaritans) and a syncretistic kind of worship.

Thus the Northern Kingdom is brought to an end in 722 B.C.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (2 Kgs 11-17)

1. What influence did Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, try to exert upon the kingdom of Judah? How had she come into this influential position? How were her plans frustrated?
2. For what is Joash, King of Judah, best known?
3. Under whose rule did Elisha die? What unusual events are reported in connection with his death?
4. What led to the downfall of Amaziah, King of Judah?
5. Under which king did Jonah serve as the LORD's prophet? What world conditions at this time permitted his missionary service?
6. What led to the downfall of Azariah (Uzziah), King of Judah? Which prophet began his service under his rule?
7. What becomes more apparent as the history of the Northern Kingdom comes to an end? (Give details)
8. Under which king did the Kingdom of Judah suffer a severe political and religious decline? In what ways?
9. Which power finally put an end to the Northern Kingdom? In what year?
10. Review the development of the Samaritans. (See the powerpoint.)

SUMMARY OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH (2 Kgs 1-17)

Ch	ISRAEL	JUDAH
1	Joram - 12 yrs. Elijah's ascension. Ministry of Elisha. Moab's rebellion. War against Ben Hadad of Aram. Elisha anoints Hazael of Aram.	Jehoram - 8 yrs. Marries Athaliah, Ahab's daughter. Edom's rebellion.
8	Defeat by Hazael.	Ahaziah - 1 yr. Son of Athaliah. Killed by Jehu. (Obadiah?) (Joel?)
9	Jehu - 28 yrs. Anointed by Elisha's servant. "The mad charioteer." Massacres Joram,	Athaliah - 6 yrs. Queen Regent. Tries to destroy royal house. Put to death in coup by priest Jehoida, who saves: Joash - Partial reform. 40 yrs. Repairs temple. "Joash chest." Made tributary to Hazael. Assassinated.
11	Jezebel, House of Ahab, Ahaziah, House of Ahaziah of Judah, Ministers of Baal. Restores calf worship. Loses east of Jordan to Hazael of Aram.	
12	Jehoahaz - 17 yrs. Returns to calf worship after receiving the LORD's help vs. Hazael.	
13	Jehoash - 16 yrs. Defeats Amaziah & Aram. Death of Elisha.	Amaziah - 29 yrs. Partial reform. Defeats Edom. Defeated by Jehoash.
14	Jeroboam II - 41 yrs. Time of outward prosperity but inner corruption. (Jonah) (Amos) (Hosea)	
15	Zechariah - 6 mo. Assassinated <u>Shallum</u> - 1 mo. <u>Menahem</u> - 10 yrs. Tributary to Assyria	Azariah (Uzziah) - 52 yrs. Partial reform. Coregency with son. (Isaiah begins)
16	Pekahiah - 2 yrs. Upset in coup by -	Jotham - 16 yrs. Partial reform. (Micah)
17	<u>Pekah</u> - 20 yrs. Deportation by Assyrians Hoshea - 9 yrs. Vassal of Shalmaneser of Assyria. Finally destroyed (722 BC)	Ahaz - 16 yrs. Desecrated temple. Tributary to Tiglath Pileser. Sacrificed his own son! (Isaiah)

Note: Kings beginning new dynasties are underlined (Israel). Names of prophets are in ().

ISRAEL AND JUDAH IN WORLD HISTORY

In the mid 8th Century BC both Israel in the north and Judah in the south enjoyed a period of prominence due to the vacuum of superpowers on the international scene. Egypt was a washed-up has been, and Assyria was in temporary decline. Under Jeroboam II (781-753 BC) Israel reached the zenith of its power. Under Azariah/Uzziah (791-739) Judah also prospered for a time, militarily and economically. Both kingdoms, situated as they were in the center of important trade routes of the Fertile Crescent, were political and economic centers of importance.

Spiritually, Israel under Jeroboam II was dead. Amos warned: “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion. I will raise up against you a nation and they shall oppress you” (Am 6:1-14). Yet as Israel enjoyed comparative freedom and power among world nations, the LORD used this time to send his prophet Jonah to a world power which was temporarily in eclipse, to the city of Nineveh in Assyria (2 Kgs 14:25). This was the very power, of course, which Amos later warned about.

ASSYRIA

Assyria revived as a world power under the great Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BC). He invaded Aram, subdued a Palestinian coalition formed against him, subdued Merodach-Baladan of Babylon, and when Israel’s power rapidly disintegrated after Jeroboam II, he subdued Menahem (752-741 BC) and began deportations from Israel. (He is the “Pul” mentioned as “king of Assyria” in 2 Kgs 15:19.) Azariah tried to help form a league against him and also ran into considerable trouble in the process (2 Kgs 14:17-20). Ahaz, one of Azariah’s successors, became completely submissive to Tiglath-Pileser, even to the point of introducing the worship of Assyrian deities into the temple at Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kgs 16:7-18).

Shalmaneser IV (727-722) succeeded Tiglath-Pileser. When Israel’s Hoshea (731-722) tried to enlist Egypt’s help and rebel against Assyria, Shalmaneser imprisoned Hoshea and began a siege of three years duration against Samaria (2 Kgs 17:3-6). Apparently Shalmaneser died during this final siege of Samaria and the work of destruction was completed by Sargon (722-705 BC). The Northern Kingdom of Israel’s disintegration followed.

Sargon was followed by Sennacherib (705-681 BC). It was no doubt early in his reign that Merodach-Baladan of Babylonia plotted with Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:12-19), and Hezekiah (715-686 BC) foolishly showed the Babylonians all his treasures. (Incidentally, the events as reported in 2 Kings are not in chronological order. The illness of Hezekiah and the embassy from Merodach-Baladin must have preceded Sennacherib’s attack.) Sennacherib marched against Babylon and subdued it. Hezekiah knew that he was in danger and as a result accomplished the feat of having a water tunnel cut from the spring of Gihon into the western part of the city (2 Kgs 20:20; 2 Chr 32:30). This project is still a marvel for the modern tourist to Jerusalem!

Having subdued Babylon for the time being, Sennacherib turned on Judah, captured most of its key cities, including Lachish, made Hezekiah tributary, thwarted Egyptian efforts to interfere, and sent his commander Rabshakeh (tr. “field commander” in NIV, 2 Kgs 18:17, 37) to threaten Jerusalem. The siege of Jerusalem is reported in 2 Kgs 18 and 19 and Isaiah 36 and 37. After the slaying of 185,000 by the angel of the LORD at Jerusalem, Sennacherib was forced to return to Nineveh, where he was killed by two of his sons some years later (2 Kgs 19:37).

Sennacherib was succeeded by Esarhaddon (681-668 BC), who carried on successful campaigns against Phoenicia and Egypt. Manasseh (687-642 BC) was left pretty much alone as long as he paid tribute to Assyria. Assurbanipal (668-626 BC) succeeded Esarhaddon. He fought a number of successful campaigns and was noted for his rebuilding of Nineveh, but after his time the decline of Assyria was

rapid. Egypt revolted. The Medes conquered Asshur in 614 BC. Nineveh fell to the Medes and Babylonians in 612 BC.

With the decline of Assyria the kingdom of Judah enjoyed its last period of spiritual revival under Josiah (640-608 BC), who tried to renew all of Israel in his reform. When Neco of Egypt passed through Palestine in 609 BC, Josiah tried to stop him at the Megiddo pass and was killed in battle. Judah's fortunes quickly deteriorated under Josiah's sons Jehoahaz (609 BC) and Jehoiakim (609-598 BC), when Egypt and Babylon entered the scene.

BABYLON

The Babylonian kingdom rose to power under Nebopolassar, and especially under his son Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC) who succeeded him. Nebuchadnezzar was the one who commanded Babylon's army which defeated Egypt at Carchemish in 605 BC (Jr 25:1). Soon thereafter Nebuchadnezzar marched against Jerusalem for the first time and made the first deportation of captives, including Daniel (2 Kgs 24:1). This was under the reign of Jehoiakim (609-598 BC), and took place in 605 BC.

When Jehoiakim with the aid of Egypt revolted against Nebuchadnezzar in 598 BC, he was killed, or simply died during the siege (cf. Jer 22:18-19; 36:30; 2 Kgs 24:2-6), and was said to "have the burial of a donkey" (Jr 22:19).

When Jehoiachin (598-597 BC) became king, Nebuchadnezzar completed the siege of Jerusalem in 597 BC, and took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon with the second large deportation of Jewish notables, including Ezekiel (2 Kgs 24:14; Ez 1:1-2).

Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah (597-586 BC) on Judah's throne, but when Zedekiah rebelled in 589 BC the Assyrian king decided to break Judah's power for good. The Edomites took advantage of Nebuchadnezzar's siege and also invaded Judah (Ob 1:10-14; Ps 137:7; Lm 4:21-22). Nebuchadnezzar destroyed one city after the other - Ramat Rahel, Beth Shemesh, Lachish, Arad, Engedi. The walls of Jerusalem were breached and the city destroyed (586 BC). Zedekiah's sons were killed before his eyes. He was then blinded and led captive to Babylon (2 Kgs 25:1-21). (Jeremiah also records some of these final events, particularly his dealings with King Zedekiah, in chapters 37 to 39 of his book.)

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

THE LAST YEARS OF JUDAH (2 Kgs 18-25)

2 KINGS 18-20

With the end of the Northern Kingdom (ch. 17) our study of kings is now restricted to those who reigned in Judah:

HEZEKIAH - Son of the wicked Ahaz, Hezekiah begins to reign at age 25 and rules for 29 years. The three chapters reporting his reign mention the following chief points:

1. “He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done.” (A more complete account of his religious reformation is given us in 2 Chronicles 29-32.) He abolished every kind of idolatry, and restored true worship. When restoring the celebration of the Passover, he also invited the northern tribes to participate.
2. In spite of the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, Hezekiah reversed the pro-Assyrian policy of his father and resisted Assyrian hegemony along with Merodach Baladan of Babylon.
3. When Sennacherib (son of Sargon II) was on his way to fight against Egypt (according to Herodotus), he sent his commander Rabshakeh with a detachment to Jerusalem. Hezekiah refused to surrender. (An interesting sidelight in this connection is the use of the Hebrew and Aramaic languages in communications between Judah and Assyria; ch 18:26).
4. Hezekiah turns to the prophet Isaiah in this time of siege. 2 Kings 19 gives us the king’s prayer for deliverance and Isaiah’s reply, in which the prophet foretells Sennacherib’s fall. (Incidentally, these chapters from 2 Kings which deal with Hezekiah correspond closely with Isaiah 36-39.) Judah is miraculously delivered by the angel of the LORD, who kills 185,000 Assyrians.
5. The first part of Chapter 20 relates the incident of Hezekiah’s illness and his miraculous recovery, which is substantiated with the sign on the sundial.
6. The second part of Chapter 20 reports the visit to Jerusalem by a delegation from Merodach Baladan, king of Babylon. This was an imprudent act on Hezekiah’s part to show this foreign delegation all his treasures. Isaiah pointed out that these treasures would one day be carried off, that Hezekiah’s descendants would become slaves, but that Hezekiah would enjoy peace and security in his own time.
7. Hezekiah’s change in the water-conduit leading from the spring and pool of Gihon is also worthy of mention. By arranging for the water to flow underground into the city, the supply in case of siege could be better protected (see a map of Jerusalem).

2 KINGS 21

MANASSEH

Manasseh becomes king at the early age of 12 and rules for 55 years. He is guilty of just about every idolatrous practice imaginable, sacrificing his own son, indulging in sorcery, and putting an Asherah pole in the temple. The LORD therefore through the prophets predicts such dire punishments that “their ears will tingle.” We are also told that Manasseh “shed much innocent blood.” This would mean also that of

God's prophets. Tradition has it that Isaiah during his reign was sawn in two. According to 2 Chronicles 33:11 Manasseh had a brief time of conversion when captured by the Assyrians, but upon his return this did not last. The apocryphal Prayer of Manasseh is a fictional expansion of this incident.

AMON

He had a short, evil reign of 2 yrs and was assassinated by his officials.

2 KINGS 22-24

JOSIAH

Josiah, another "child-king," assumed the reign when 8 years old, and ruled for 55 years. After two very evil kings, we have a good king. "He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left."

During his reign we have the incident of the finding of the "Book of the Law" in the temple of the LORD by Hilkiah the priest (cf. Dt 31:26), and reported to the king through his secretary Shaphan.

Josiah inquires through the prophetess Hulda (why not through Jeremiah isn't known) as to the meaning of all this for them. She gives dire predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, but adds that this would not happen in Josiah's time.

The discovery of the Book of the Law gives impetus to a thorough reform, which extended not only throughout Judea, but to Bethel and the cities in Samaria as well. A Passover is celebrated (see 2 Chr 35:1-19) to which the remnant of the northern tribes are invited. "Not since the days of the judges ... had any such Passover been observed."

Unfortunately, Neco of Egypt on his way to help Assyria against Babylon engaged Josiah in battle at Megiddo, and Josiah was killed. Chronicles adds that Neco requested permission to pass through, but that Josiah did not wish to remain neutral in this conflict.

The finding of the Book of the Law, of course, has offered much grist for the mill of negative critics. Hummel summarizes: "Critics commonly make this find the axis of their entire evolutionistic reconstruction of the history of Israel's religion and of Biblical literature" (*The Word Becoming Flesh*, p. 147).

It should also be mentioned that shortly after Josiah came to power, Assyria collapsed and disappeared precipitously. The competition for achieving world supremacy was now between Neco, Pharaoh of Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It would not be much of a contest.

JEHOAHAZ (Shallum)

He ruled but 3 months before being put in chains by Neco of Egypt. He is otherwise described as evil.

JEHOIAKIM (Eliakim)

He was another son of Josiah, who chose to be subservient to Neco rather than rebellious as his brother. Jeremiah relates that he lived in luxury while the land was impoverished. Nebuchadnezzar defeated Neco at Carchemish on the Euphrates in 605 and made Jehoiakim his vassal in the process. Jehoiakim, however, joined the resistance against Nebuchadnezzar and was attacked by Babylon and its allies.

According to Jeremiah he “was buried like an ass” (Jr 22:18 ff.). This apparently refers to Nebuchadnezzar casting his body out of its tomb. His reign lasted 11 years. Under his rule we have the first deportation of captives to Babylon (605 BC), including Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

JEHOIACHIN (Jeconiah, Coniah)

After three months of his rule Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem and carried off the second contingent of captives to Babylon, including Jehoiachin (597 BC). Ezekiel describes Jehoiachin as a distrustful and even violent person (Ezk 17). After 37 years in a Babylonian prison Jehoiachin was released by Evil-Merodach, who became king of Babylon at that time, and was allowed to put aside his prison clothes and eat at the king’s table.

ZEDEKIAH

This son of Josiah was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, but broke his oath of loyalty, trusting in help from Egypt. As a result Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem once more. The siege lasted three years. During this time, as we read in Jeremiah (Ch. 37-39), Zedekiah was helpless, perplexed, appealed to Jeremiah, but failed to heed his advice. He did protect Jeremiah against his bitter enemies in the regime. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem (586 BC) and had Zedekiah’s eyes put out.

2 KINGS 25

This final chapter of 2 Kings brings some of the details of Jerusalem’s destruction. From Zedekiah’s 9th to 11th years of rule the city was under siege. Conditions of famine prevailed. When the city wall was broken through, Zedekiah tried to flee. He was overtaken on the plains of Jordan, his sons were killed before his eyes, and he was blinded and taken in shackles to Babylon (586 BC).

The temple together with its furnishings was completely destroyed. The priests were executed. Gedaliah, a supporter of Jeremiah, was appointed as governor by the Babylonians, but he was murdered by Ishmael, one of the army captains of Judah. Many of those who were left fled to Egypt in fear, taking Jeremiah along with them. (The brief report of all this in 2 Kings is augmented in the writings of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel.)

The book closes on the positive note referred to under Jehoiachin, namely his release from prison under Evil-Merodach and privilege of eating at the king’s table. God’s promises to David have not been forgotten!

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A knowledge of the history of this period of the kings is important as background material for an understanding of the prophets. The following chart lists the prophets who were active in this period, not in chronological order, but in the order in which they occur in the Scriptures. (In some cases it is possible to fix their time of activity almost exactly; in other cases there is insufficient evidence to do so.)

PROPHET	PLACE OF ACTIVITY	YEARS	SCRIPTURE	UNDER KINGS
Isaiah	Judah	739-685 BC	Is 1:1; 6:1; 7:1; 20:1; Is Ch. 36-39; He 11:37	Uzziah Jotham Ahaz Hezekiah Manasseh
Jeremiah	Judah	627-580 BC	Jr 1:2-3; 3:6; 11:21-23; 21:1; 22:11; 24:1; 25:1-3; 25:8-12; 26:1; 27:1 etc.; Jr Chs. 37- 40; Jr 52:31-33	Josiah Jehoahaz Jehoiakim Jehoiachin Zedekiah (Gedaliah)
Ezekiel	Babylon	592-570BC	Ez 1:1-3; 24:1-2; 33:21	(Jehoiachin in exile)
Daniel	Babylon Persia	606-530BC	Dn 1:1-7; Ch.1-4; 5:1ff; 6:1ff; 10:1	(Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar Darius Cyrus)
Hosea	Israel	760-720 BC	Ho 1:1	Jeroboam II Zechariah Shallum Menahem Pekahiah Pekah Hoshea
Joel	Judah	840 BC? 835 BC?	(Locusts; Day of the LORD)	Ahaziah? Joash?
Amos	Israel	760 BC	Am 1:1; 7:12-17; 9:11- 12	Jeroboam II (Uzziah)
Obadiah	Judah?	845 BC??	(v 1-9 quoted in Jr 49:7-16) (2 Kgs 8:20)	Contra Edom (vs. Jerusalem under Jehoram??)
Jonah	Israel (Nineveh)	780-760 BC	2 Kgs 14:25; Jon 1:1; 3:1	Jeroboam II
Micah	Judah	737-690 BC	Mi 1:1	Jotham Ahaz Hezekiah
Nahum	Judah	After 664- Before 612	Na 1:1 (Fall of Nineveh)	Manasseh? Josiah?
Habakkuk	Judah	620-610 BC?	Hab 1:6 (Babylon)	Jehoiakim?
Zephaniah	Judah	640-608 BC	Zph 1:1	Josiah

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION (2 Kgs 18-25)

1. In what way was the religious reformation of Hezekiah more complete than that of those who preceded him? In which experiences did Hezekiah demonstrate his trust in the LORD? Which incident, however, revealed a certain amount of imprudence on his part?
2. Contrast the reign of Manasseh with that of his father.
3. Which unusual event took place during the reign of Josiah? What interpretation have the negative critics placed upon this? Why is their interpretation untenable?
4. Trace, the rapid deterioration of rule in Judah under the three kings who followed Josiah. (Give details)
5. Under which king was Jerusalem and especially the temple finally destroyed? By whom? In which year?
6. On what positive note does 2 Kings end? What does this indicate?
7. Which of the prophets:
 - a. Records Hezekiah's prayer?
 - b. Was taken captive with Jehoiachin?
 - c. Prophesied under Jeroboam II?
 - d. Was a contemporary of Isaiah?
 - e. Foretold the destruction of Nineveh?
 - f. Prophesied throughout the final decline and captivity of Judah

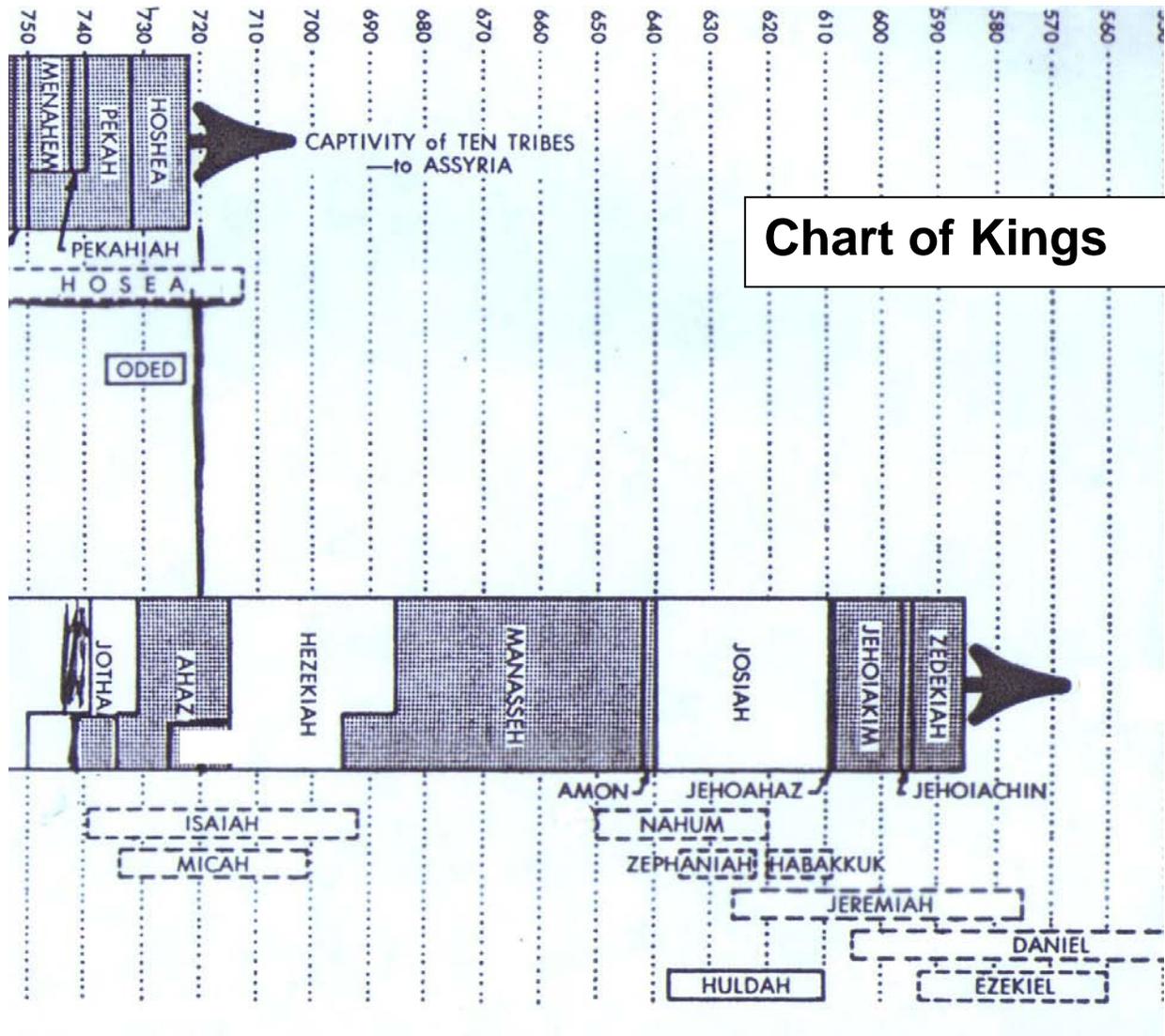


Chart of Kings

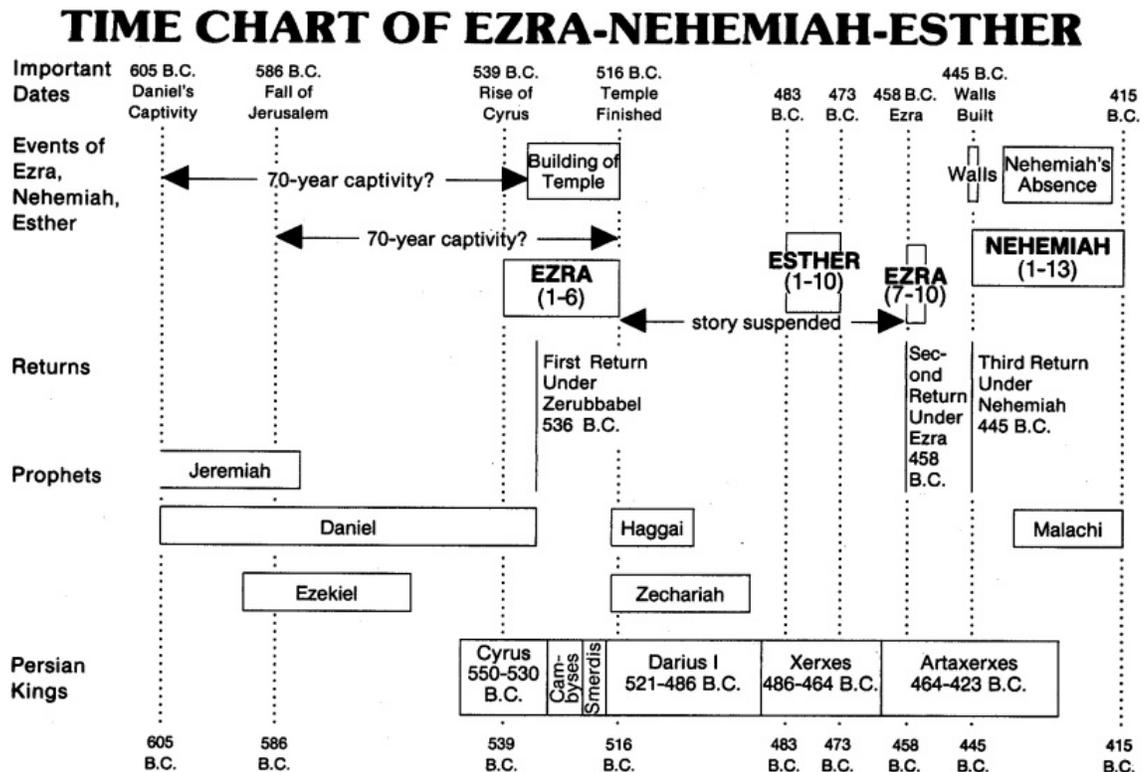
CHAPTER FIFTY
THE RETURN FROM EXILE
ZERUBBABEL AND JOSHUA
(Ezra 1-6)

The restoration of the nation of Israel after the Babylonian Exile took place in four steps.

1. Zerubbabel, prince of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest, led a return almost immediately after the fall of Babylon in 539 BC. After delay of a couple of decades, this group succeeded in rebuilding the Temple. Then, for many decades there was little progress and even decline. This story is told in Ezra 1-6.

2. During this interval the people of Israel were threatened with extinction through the plot of Haman. God providentially used Esther and Mordecai to preserve Israel so that the work of restoring the nation could continue. This story is told in the book of Esther.
3. After a delay that was as long as the Exile itself, the LORD sent Ezra in about 458 BC to lead the spiritual rebuilding of the nation. This story is told in Ezra 7-10.
4. In about 445 BC Nehemiah returned as governor of Judah and completed the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. This story is told in Nehemiah.

The following chart shows the relationship of these events.



AUTHORSHIP

The book of Ezra is a continuation of Chronicles. The two books are linked by the same type of overlap that links Luke and Acts. Since the book of Ezra does not specifically name its author, some commentators believe that an unknown author, whom they call the Chronicler wrote Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, using memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah as two of his main sources, but it seem most likely that Ezra is the author of the book. Only the second half of the book is written in the 1st person. The events of chapters 1-6 are from well before the time of Ezra, but it is likely that he wrote this part too, using sources available to him. Jewish tradition identifies him as the author. Ezra may have written Chronicles as a review of Israel's history up to his time.

Ezra (עֶזְרָא) was a priest descended from Aaron, Eleazer, Phineas, and Zadok (7:5). He was a teacher well versed in God's Word (7:6-10), whose mission was to lead the people back to that Word. He seems to have played a role in gathering the canonical books together into one collection, by bringing back with him from Babylon the scrolls which were recognized as the standard manuscripts of the text. Tradition also credits him with a role in establishing and solidifying synagogue worship.

OUTLINE

The main theme of Ezra is a contrast of God's grace with Israel's unfaithfulness. In spite of the fact that the LORD restored them to the land of Israel, the people were very lax at rebuilding the Temple and the nation. Nevertheless, God in his grace sent them prophets like Haggai and Zechariah to encourage them in this work and a powerful leader like Ezra to spur them on. This story is told in two parts.

- I. The 1st Return, under Joshua and Zerubbabel (ch. 1-6)
 - a. The exiles return (ch. 1-2)
 - 1. Cyrus authorizes the return (ch. 1)
 - 2. The list of the returnees (ch. 2)
 - b. Opposition halts the rebuilding the Temple (ch. 3-4)
 - c. The Temple completed (ch. 5-6)
- II. The 2nd Return, under Ezra (Ch. 7-10)
 - a. Ezra's Return (ch. 7-8)
 - b. Ezra's Reforms (ch. 9-10)

All this was done to prepare the way for the long-awaited Messiah.

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EZRA 1

v. 1-4 Cyrus was the great founding king of the Persian Empire. In accordance with his policy also elsewhere he authorized the rebuilding of the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem. This return fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah (Is 44:28; 45:1) and Jeremiah (Je 25: 11-12; 29:10) and the expectant hope of Daniel (Da 9:1-2). Thus the book begins with an emphasis on the LORD's fulfillment of his word.

Ezra quotes from the actual decree. At a time when subjects could not move around or transport money freely, the rights granted in this decree were special privileges.

v. 5-11 The key words in this section are "everyone whose heart God had moved." The LORD blessed the plans to rebuild the temple in three ways: 1) people were willing to move to Jerusalem to carry out this work; 2) others supported them with offerings, 3) the king restored the temple vessels to them.

There has been much discussion of the identity of Sheshbazzar. The most common idea is that this is another name of Zerubbabel. Another idea is that this is an older relative of Zerubbabel, who soon faded from view, perhaps his uncle who is also called Shenazzar (1 Chr 3:17-18).

EZRA 2

Chapter 2 consists mostly of the list of returnees. We may find such lists about as interesting as reading the telephone book, but we should not rush by them too quickly. Like the memorial book of our congregation they remain as a testimony to the lives and offerings of the saints and of the grace of God

that moved them.

v. 1-35 This section lists the leaders and the returnees classified either by ancestry or ancestral home. A parallel list occurs in Nehemiah 7.

v. 36-63 This section list various class of temple workers: priests, Levites, singers, gate-keepers, and temple servants. Since service in the priesthood was based on lineage, no one could serve unless he had evidence of this genealogy.

v. 64-70 The total of returnees is about 50,000 including servants, a large number, but not a large number to build a nation nor a large percentage of the exiles. Again there is an emphasis on the generous gifts.

EZRA 3

The priority is to rebuild the altar and temple so sacrificial worship can resume. The work gets off to a quick start, and the autumn festival of Tabernacles is observed in accord with the Law even before there is a temple.

The necessary arrangements are made to build the Temple, and a festive beginning mixes tears and shouts of joy. The tears may have been tears of repentance or tears of joy, but Haggai 2:3 suggests they were tears of disappointment.

The work soon falters and halts. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah make it clear that among the chief reasons was the laxness and self-centeredness of many of the people, but another reason was the opposition of the surrounding peoples, who did not want Israel restored.

EZRA 4

A second reason for the opposition was resentment that the Jews would not let their syncretistic neighbors the Samaritans join in the rebuilding. These enemies hired lobbyists to try to undermine the plans of the Jews in the Persian court. Though the relevant factor here is the lobbying against the rebuilding of the Temple during the reigns of Cyrus and Darius, Ezra quotes from a document from his own time which had been addressed to his king, Artaxerxes, very likely because he did not have access to documents of the efforts from the earlier period. Thus verses six through twenty-three are a digression from the discussion of opposition to the building of the temple. They speak of the opposition to the rebuilding of the city and its wall after the temple was rebuilt and before Ezra came to Jerusalem. Though the document is so to speak “out of time,” it provides evidence of the venomous spirit of the opposition, who deceitfully pretend they have the king’s best interests at heart. Like this complaint to Artaxerxes shortly before the return of Ezra, the earlier complaints in the days of Zerubbabel were successful, and the work on the temple was halted.

Note: the court documents are presented in Aramaic, the international diplomatic language of the period.

EZRA 5 and 6

The LORD got the work of the temple going again in two ways. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah successfully restored the morale of the people. The opposition of the Persian court was reversed.

The builders are challenged by Persian officials who want to see their “building permits.” These officials do not seem to be hostile but are conscientious bureaucrats doing their job. When the Jews claim to have a

valid authorization, and a search of the court records shows that they were telling the truth, their right to build the temple is affirmed, and the opposition is threatened with legal retribution. If the investigation was instigated by the enemies of Judah, their plan certainly backfired on them.

The account stresses the providence of God in this series of events. Chance events (a good official on duty, finding the old record in an alternate archive) and great kings (Darius the great preserver and organizer of the empire) all serve the will of the LORD.

The work resumes, and the temple is dedicated in about 516 BC, more than twenty years after the return. Notice that all twelve tribes of Israel are included in the sacrifices, not just Judah and Benjamin. The nation is being restored. The reference to the king of Assyria reinforces this point. The exile which began with the destruction of the north by the Assyrians is now being reversed.

Book I of Ezra concludes with a happy celebration of the Passover.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Ezra 1-6)

1. What was the content of Cyrus's decree? Why should this decree have been no surprise?
2. What were the responses to the decree?
3. What is the significance of the long list of returnees?
4. What was the first priority of the returnees?
5. What problems halted the building of the temple? How were these problems resolved?
6. How does the story emphasize the theme of restoration of all Israel?
7. What was Israel's relationship with the Persian kings?
8. What are some of the applications which you see in this section for the church today?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

See the powerpoint on Persia and Israel.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

THE PRESERVATION OF ISRAEL

(Esther)

After two decades of effort, the returnees had rebuilt the Temple in about 516 BC, during the reign of Darius, a great administrator and consolidator of the Persian Empire. Darius, however, had one very embarrassing failure. In 490 BC he had invaded Greece to punish the Athenians and others for their meddling with the Persians' control of the Greeks who lived in what today is the west coast of Turkey. In one of the great upsets of history, he suffered defeat at the battle of Marathon (a battle which still commemorated in the Olympic marathon). To avenge this blot on the Persian record his son Xerxes, who came to the throne in 483 BC, launched a massive invasion of Greece—the largest invasion to this point in history. In what can probably be rated as the biggest upset ever, the Greeks held off the massive Persian army at Thermopylae and smashed the invasion in the great sea battle at Salamis (480 BC), considered one of the most decisive battles in history because it preserved Greece and Western civilization. In the midst of these world-shaking events which receive headlines in the history books, another world-shaking history changing event was taking place back-stage, almost unnoticed. The LORD of history was using the intrigues in Xerxes' palace to preserve his people Israel so Jerusalem could be built and Messiah could come. This is the story of Esther.

AUTHORSHIP

The author is unknown. Mordecai is a plausible suggestion.

CANONICITY

The canonicity of Esther has been challenged among Jews and Christians on the following grounds:

1. The divine name is not used in the book.
2. There is not much overtly religious behavior by the main characters.
3. Esther's behavior
 - a. What is a nice Jewish girl doing with a dirty old man like Xerxes?
 - b. She hides her faith.
 - c. She is reluctant to help the Jews.
4. The vengeance by the Jews against their enemies
5. Esther and Mordecai add to the festivals instituted by Moses.
6. Esther is not quoted in the New Testament or Dead Sea Scrolls.

Despite these oft-expressed reservations, the canonicity of Esther was never successfully challenged. With good reason. In all of these books (Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther) God works with quiet providence. Ezra and Nehemiah are much more forthright in expressing their faith, but this is a difference in the behavior of the chief characters of the books, not a difference in God's way of operating in the books.

TEXT

The Septuagint has several additions to the text. These have the character of being artificial insertions, designed to make the text more religious, and they cannot be regarded as original.

OUTLINE

No outline is really necessary to follow this fast-moving, well-told story, but the following indicates the main progression of the plot.

- I. The plot against the Jews (1-4)
 - A. The setting of the plot (1-2)
 - B. Haman's plot (3-4)
- II. The delivery of the Jews (5-10)
 - A. Esther's plan (5)
 - B. Mordecai rises, Haman falls (6,7)
 - C. The Jews triumph (8,9)
 - D. The greatness of Xerxes and Mordecai (10)

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ESTHER 1

The curtain opens with scenes of power and grandeur, spitefulness and intrigue—the life-styles of the rich and famous. The rabbis add to the soap-opera atmosphere by reporting that the queen was ordered to appear wearing only her crown. All of this adds to the fascinating atmosphere of the story, but it should not distract use from the point of the story: how did the God of history direct the affairs of a great empire so that a humble Jewish girl would be in a position to save his people Israel.

v. 1-9 Here we see the fabulous riches and power of Esther's future husband, who turns out to be not the king but the pawn in the story.

This banquet may well be the gathering to plan the invasion of Greece, which is reported in the account of the Greek historian Herodotus. Herodotus's description of Xerxes as vain, violent, and hot-tempered, rich in power but poor in judgment matches the biblical account.

v. 10-22 Here we learn how it happened that Esther got the chance to enter the king's harem. Xerxes become enraged when Vashti disobeys him in the presence of his court. She is rejected as queen.

Commentators who spend time debating whether Vashti is an arrogant wife or a courageous resister to a chauvinist husband miss the point. Neither Vashti nor Xerxes are being presented as exemplars of marital bliss. If Vashti can be identified with the queen Amestris in Herodotus, she was as evil and self-centered as her drunken boor of a husband.

ESTHER 2

v. 1-18 The secular chronology suggests that the invasion of Greece occurred between chapters 1 and 2. After a four-year interval, Xerxes a notorious womanizer, was looking for a new queen. Esther will be among the applicants.

At this point the two leading characters are introduced. Mordecai is a Jew who has remained in exile, serving in a mid-level job at the Persian court. He is the guardian of his orphaned cousin, Hadassah

(Esther) [אֶסְתֵּר / הַדַּסְתָּה].

Esther is among the candidates for the position of queen. The text is not explicit about whether she volunteered or was drafted. She seems to be a willing participant, but many unwilling women were forced into Xerxes' net. At any rate she agrees to hide her faith. She is a stark contrast to Daniel and his friends.

When the one-night auditions have been completed, Esther is the winner and becomes Xerxes' favorite. She is called queen. Whether this means her child would have been accepted as heir by the nobility is doubtful. It is likely that the next king, Artaxerxes, was the son of Vashti. Esther clearly did not have a close husband-wife relationship with Xerxes and was dependent on his whims.

v. 19-22 By another turn of providence Mordecai, who is watching Esther from a distance, uncovers a plot and saves the king's life. Intrigues motivated by personal affronts from the king or by political ambition were commonplace in the Persian court. For a shot at Xerxes you needed to take a number and get in line. The important fact is that a seemingly unconnected string of events is setting up the delivery of Israel.

ESTHER 3

Mordecai and the Jews fall under the wrath of Haman, the chief official of Xerxes, because of Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman. This is somewhat puzzling because there was no law prohibiting Jews from bowing to rulers. It happens often in the Old Testament. The text offers no judgment on whether Mordecai's act was right or wrong. It simply tells how the latent hatred for the Jews was brought to the foreground.

Haman relies on lots to pick the lucky day to kill all the Jews and then obtains the king's consent by disguising his own malice as serving the king's best interests, including a big payoff for both of them. After the king signs the death order for millions, the king and Haman callously sit down for a drink or two. But the day of death lies months in the future.

ESTHER 4

A desperate Mordecai seeks help from Esther, the last hope for the Jews. She is reluctant to help, realizing she has limited leverage with Xerxes. When she agrees that this is their only chance, she proceeds more with resignation than with confidence.

The implicit theme of the book is stated in Mordecai's words, "Who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this." "If you remain silent, relief and deliverance for the Jews will come from another place." God's will will be done with us or without us.

ESTHER 5

Esther requests a private banquet to try to gain the king's favor, but from either cunning or cowardice she fails to act. There is time for another turn of providence.

Here we see on full display the poisonous fruits of envy. Consumed with bitterness, unable to enjoy all he has, Haman builds the gallows that will become his own.

ESTHER 6

In another twist of fate (i.e., divine providence) the king's vanity and restlessness lead him to his favorite reading material, the annals of his greatness. In the process the king is reminded that Mordecai had saved him. The king makes plans to honor Mordecai, and in delicious irony Haman determines Mordecai's reward for him. Haman and his family have a premonition of doom.

ESTHER 7

Esther at last exposes Haman's plot, and the king is enraged. Esther is Haman's last chance for mercy. Haman, who has undoubtedly escaped unpunished for many evil deeds is done in by "bad luck." He lands on top of the queen on the couch just as the king is entering the room (bad career move!). A servant helpfully suggests that there is a nearby gallows available, and Haman dies on the gallows he made for Mordecai.

ESTHER 8

There is still one more problem to be solved. The royal decree against the Jews still stands. It cannot be undone. But because of the lucky roll of the dice, there still is time. A new decree gives the Jews time to prepare to defend themselves. Those in the empire who like to side with the front runner switch to the Jews' side.

ESTHER 9

In two days of fighting and executions the Jews overwhelm their enemies throughout the empire. The total of 75,000 seems shocking, but it is small change in comparison with events we have seen in such places as Rwanda, Dafur, and Bosnia.

The festival of Purim is established to commemorate the victory.

ESTHER 10

A postscript summarizes the greatness of Xerxes and Mordecai. If Mordecai is the source of the body of the story, this postscript may have been added by another.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Esther)

1. How does the book of Esther link up with secular history and with the history of Israel?
2. What elements in the book led many to question the canonicity of the book?
3. What is your judgment of the dispute between Xerxes and Vashti?
4. Evaluate the role of Mordecai and Esther in the process by which she became queen.
5. Did Mordecai share in the blame for Haman's bitterness?
6. What is the main lesson of the book of Esther?
7. List as many as you can of the seemingly random events which led to the salvation of Israel?
8. After the death of Haman what problem remained? How was it resolved?
9. Is Esther presented as the heroine of the book? Support your answer with specific evidence from the book.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

See the powerpoint or a report on the festival of Purim.

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO THE RETURN OF EZRA (Ezra 7-10)

About 60 years elapse between the end of Ezra 6 and the beginning of Ezra 7. During this interval Israel was threatened with extinction by the plan of Haman to destroy all the Jews. If Haman had succeeded, there would have been no return by Ezra and Nehemiah, Jerusalem would not have been rebuilt, and Israel would not have been restored to await Christ's coming.

But the delivery under Esther provided only an opportunity, not a solution to the plight of Jerusalem and Judah. To provide a solution the LORD sent Ezra.

EZRA 7

Ezra is described as a man who studied the Law, who taught the Law, and who lived the Law. An abbreviated genealogy traces his lineage back to Aaron through the line of the high priests. Seraiah is the name of the last high priest before the captivity. We do not know what Ezra's position was in the Persian government, but he seems to have had ready access both to the king and to official records. The motive of the king in sending Ezra and Nehemiah to Jerusalem was to have trustworthy administrators in the strategic province at time when the Greeks and ambitious Persians satraps were stirring unrest in Egypt.

The key words in this section are "the hand of the LORD his God was upon him."

The letter from Artaxerxes gave Ezra several important rights:

1. the right to repatriate willing Israelites to their former homeland,
2. the right to receive and transport offerings for the temple and city,
3. the right to requisition further resources from the royal treasury (within limits),
4. the right of the temple staff to exemption from taxes,
5. the right to govern the religious life of Jews throughout the entire area of Syria-Palestine, not just in Jerusalem.

This credentials document which was supplied to Ezra is very similar to other extant Aramaic letters given to Persian officials in Trans-Euphrates.

Ezra responds with a prayer of thanks for God's providence. For the third time it is stated that God's hand was upon him. We are not aware of any direct revelations from God to Ezra. Ezra saw God's hand in his quiet providence that worked behind the scenes.

EZRA 8

Chapter 8 begins with another brief list of returnees. The number who returned was quite modest, about 1500, but it included representatives of both the priestly and the royal families. The twelve groups of returnees may be intended to remind us of the twelve tribes.

When the small group assembles at one of the irrigation canals in Babylon, Ezra is disappointed by the small turnout of Levites, and he makes a special effort to recruit more. Even then, the turnout is modest. Success was greater among the descendants of the non-Israelite Gibeonites who had performed menial work in the temple. Many were happy with the material security they had achieved in the land of exile and were content to stay there.

Ezra leads the group in fasting and prayer for a safe journey. He had been unwilling to ask for a security detail to accompany them. Ezra takes steps to demonstrate the financial integrity of his administration of the large amount of money they were transporting.

The group arrives in Jerusalem after a four-month journey covering 900 miles (about 12 miles a day). Upon arriving, they provide an accounting of the gifts and offer sacrifices on behalf of the twelve tribes.

Ezra presents his credentials to the Persian officials in the area.

EZRA 9

v. 1-4 Upon his arrival Ezra is shocked and appalled to learn that Israel had returned to their practice of intermarriage with their heathen neighbors, a practice that had brought disaster on them in the days of the judges and the kings. The ceremonial law had been designed as a hedge to set Israel apart as a special people, but they wanted to be like all the other nations. Especially shocking is the fact that the leaders of the people are leaders in this sin. Ezra visibly demonstrates his dismay. “Those who tremble at the words of God” join him in his dismay.

For us who live in a society and to some degree in a church that has lost its capacity to be shocked and appalled by sin, this part of the book of Ezra is a powerful testimony.

v. 5-15 But self-pity and grief are no solution to sin. Ezra turns to the LORD with a corporate prayer of repentance. Though he had not personally committed the sins that were dragging the nation down, he confesses the truth that the sins of one member hurt the whole body.

Ezra expresses his gratitude that God had graciously given the nation a fresh start through the degree of freedom granted by the Persian kings. As Ezekiel had foretold (Ezk 37), the nation had returned from the dead, but now they risk throwing it all away.

All the people had to present to God was their guilt. It was God’s grace alone that allowed Ezra to pray with confidence.

EZRA 10

v. 1-6 Many join Ezra’s prayer of repentance, confess their sins, and promise to support his efforts to deal with the sin. Ezra’s grief cannot end until the situation has been remedied.

v. 7-17 All the people are ordered to appear in Jerusalem for the assembly to deal with the situation. There was no separation of church and state in Israel, and Ezra had specific authority from the king to deal with such matters. Because of bad weather and the depth of the problem, the situation could not be remedied in a day. The board appointed to deal with the situation dealt with all the cases within three months after they began their investigation.

Most of the people supported the decisive dealing with the matter. There were only a few objectors. The text is not explicit about whether the objectors believed that the process was too slow or too fast—the latter seems most likely.

v. 18-43 These verses provide a list of the guilty or at least the ringleaders of the guilty. Where sin has caused public offense, there must be an accounting.

The book ends very abruptly, but the author is aware that the story is not over. The book of Nehemiah is

another chapter in the same story.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Ezra 7-10)

1. Highlight the key points of the description of Ezra.
2. Why was another return necessary?
3. What was the response to Ezra's call?
4. Would Ezra have been wrong to ask the king for soldiers to provide security for the group?
5. What privileges and authority does Ezra receive from the king?
6. What lessons do we learn from Ezra's handling of the finances of the group?
7. How does the book of Ezra provide a strong preaching of the law?
8. What sin was again dragging down the nation? How was the situation to be remedied?
9. Wasn't Ezra adding one sin on to another by forcing the offenders to break their marriages with heathen wives?
10. What purposes were served by publishing a list of offenders?

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE THE RETURN OF NEHEMIAH (Nehemiah)

Nehemiah is a sequel to Ezra. In about 444 BC, about 12 years after Ezra returned to Jerusalem to carry out reforms, Nehemiah (נְחֵמְיָהוּ) returned to complete the rebuilding of the walls of the city. Though these two books have sometimes been joined together as one, it is best to regard them as two separate compositions. Ezra 7-10 is told from the first person perspective of Ezra. The book of Nehemiah is a recording of the memoirs of Nehemiah.

OUTLINE

The first seven chapters of Nehemiah focus on rebuilding the physical walls of the city. Chapters 8-13 focus on rebuilding the spiritual walls of the nation.

- I. Rebuilding the physical walls of Jerusalem (1-7).
 - A. Nehemiah's prayer for Jerusalem (1)
 - B. Nehemiah is sent to Jerusalem (2:1-10)
 - C. Nehemiah prepares to build the walls (2:11-20)
 - D. The builders and their work (3)
 - E. Opposition to the building (4-6:10)
 - F. The wall completed despite opposition (6:11-7:3)
 - G. The exiles who returned (7:4-47).
- II. Rebuilding the spiritual walls of Jerusalem (8-13)
 - A. Ezra reads the Law (8:1-11)
 - B. The people celebrate (8:12-18)
 - C. The Israelites make a covenant with the LORD (9,10)
 - D. Jerusalem is repopulated (11)
 - E. The Levites' role in rebuilding Jerusalem (12)
 - F. Nehemiah's final reforms (13)

NEHEMIAH 1

v. 1-11 As cupbearer, Nehemiah served in a high-level staff position in the Persian court that brought him into regular contact with the king. He is distressed to hear that nearly a century after the release of the Jews from exile Jerusalem is still in ruins. We do not know what had happened to Ezra during the last decade or if the Samaritans had destroyed previous rebuilding, but it appears that the efforts to restore Jerusalem are back nearly to ground zero.

Characteristically, Nehemiah's first response is prayer. His prayer has three main elements:

1. A plea based on the LORD's faithfulness to his covenant and to his promises
2. Repentance for Israel's sin and his own
3. A prayer for success with the king.

NEHEMIAH 2

v. 1-10 Three months later Nehemiah obtains permission from Artaxerxes to go and to rebuild Jerusalem. He approaches the king with a quick prayer to the LORD and with a well thought-out plan. He obtains rather sweeping powers and is not embarrassed to ask for troops. The fact that his absence is to

be temporary suggests that he is highly valued at the court. The king's motive in sending Nehemiah probably included a desire for a reliable man in the strategic land-bridge to the rich satrapy of Egypt, which again was restless.

The opposition is organized even before Nehemiah arrives. The Samaritans and Ammonites fear that a strong leader in Jerusalem will erode their power. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem are all known also from secular sources.

v. 11-22 After a secret night inspection reveals the magnitude of the task, Nehemiah encourages the leaders to rebuild the walls with the assurance of God's power and the king's favor.

The opposition quickly reveals their trump card. They intend to lobby against Jerusalem on the basis of its past history as a rebellious city. The fact that Nehemiah is a personal confidant of the king undercuts their strategy. But Nehemiah's strong suit is not the confidence of the king but the power of God. The LORD's strength will overcome their weakness.

Nehemiah plans to refortify only the eastern hill of the city. Even here he must leave out part of the former city because of the great amount of rubble blocking the way. On Nehemiah's tour and the areas of the work see the maps at the end of the chapter and in the powerpoint.

NEHEMIAH 3

Work will be carried on simultaneously along the whole length of the wall so that it can be completed as quickly as possible. The extensive list of those responsible for various parts of the wall provides us with both a memorial to the builders and with one of our most complete descriptions of Old Testament Jerusalem. The named builders were probably also financial supporters for that part of the work. Some of the groups are from the neighborhoods near the wall, but some are from outlying villages.

NEHEMIAH 4

The first tactic of the enemies is to undermine the morale of the workers with mockery. Nehemiah responds with the interjected prayer that is a typical trait of his book. The second gambit is to threaten attack. Nehemiah responds with prayer but also takes measures to provide a defense that will deter attack. The defenders of Jerusalem are motivated by trust in the LORD and love for their families and homes. Nehemiah has a prayer and a trowel and a sword approach to the project.

NEHEMIAH 5

Just when it seems that the external opposition is collapsing, a new threat emerges. Internal oppression of the poor by the rich threatens to destroy the cooperative effort of the people. Under the burden of Persian taxes, the cost of the project, and probably raids of the enemy in the villages, the poor are losing their land and even their families to the rich. Nehemiah's vehement attack on these violations of the Law leads to relief for the poor from this oppression.

v. 14-19 In a trait typical of the book, Nehemiah inserts a non-chronological reference. In the story line we are still in the first year of his governorship, but as Nehemiah recalls the events years later, he comments on his conduct throughout the twelve years of his administration (he was not necessarily in Jerusalem this whole time).

NEHEMIAH 6

Increasingly desperate, the enemies try to lure Nehemiah into an ambush. They try to fuel the rumors that he is plotting rebellion. They try to frighten him into hiding. They even hire false prophets. The Samaritans are aided by traitors from within Judah, especially by those who are allied with the Samaritans by intermarriage.

Nehemiah thwarts all these efforts with prayer and prudent action, and, against all odds, the wall is completed in less than two months.

NEHEMIAH 7

Nehemiah makes arrangements to assure the security of the city. The appointment of his brother as “mayor” is probably due to the fact that Nehemiah himself must regularly return to the royal court in Persia.

Because of a need to repopulate the city, which was still largely empty, Nehemiah consults the family records of those who had returned from the Captivity. This list is almost the same as the list of Ezra 2, but there are some variations due to textual transmission, variant forms of names, and the fact that the two lists are probably from different stages of the earlier census.

NEHEMIAH 8

Nehemiah calls upon Ezra to renew his reforms. We do not know how it came about that Ezra’s reforms came to be disregarded, but he makes a new effort with the support of Nehemiah. The key to the reform is a return to knowing, understanding, and obeying the Law of the LORD. Assisted by Levites as teaching assistants, Ezra presents the law. The people repent, but they are told to celebrate the New Year and Tabernacles as joyful festivals.

NEHEMIAH 9

Led by the Levites, the people make a covenant with the LORD. After contrasting their past unfaithfulness with God’s grace throughout their history, they confess their present sin and make their pledge.

NEHEMIAH 10

A list is provided of those leaders who signed the covenant on behalf of all the people, including Nehemiah. The terms of the covenant were:

1. to not intermarry with their non-Israelite neighbors,
2. to honor the Sabbath,
3. to observe the sabbatical year of rest for the land,
4. to bring all the appropriate offerings to the Temple of the LORD.

NEHEMIAH 11

After digressing to deal with the internal spiritual problems of Israel, Nehemiah picks up the story about the building of the walls where he had left off in 7:4. He now fulfills the plan to repopulate Jerusalem which was mentioned there. It is a sad commentary on the state of the people that it seems they had to draft people to get enough inhabitants for the city. Lists memorialize the settlers of the city.

NEHEMIAH 12

Because of the importance of a pure priesthood, Nehemiah presents the credentials of the priesthood. The first list (v. 1-7) names the 22 priestly families that had returned with Joshua and Zerubbabel one hundred years earlier. The second list names Levitical leaders (v. 8-9). The third list gives the line of high priests from the return until the time of Nehemiah (v. 10-11). The fourth list summarizes the priestly families from just before the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah (v. 12-21). The concluding verses tell how formal records of the priesthood were established near the end of the administration of Nehemiah.

At last after many digressions we come to the account of the dedication of the wall in the first year of Nehemiah's administration. Two processions march around the city in opposite directions and meet in the Temple for the dedication.

Administrative arrangements are made for the well-being of the temple.

NEHEMIAH 13

Now Nehemiah jumps ahead to the conclusion of his administration for a final wrap-up.

Nehemiah finds that the reforms and the covenant are still being ignored by many leaders of Israel, including the high priest. He takes decisive action.

1. He throws the high priest's Ammonite ally, Tobiah, out of the temple.
2. He reinstates the offerings to support the Levites.
3. He enforces the Sabbath laws on the merchants.
4. He takes vigorous action against the on-going sin of intermarriage, including expulsion of some priests.

As is typical of Nehemiah, he intersperses his comments with his prayers. Most of all he wants to be remembered for his spiritual reforms and purification of the priesthood, even more than for his great work of building the walls of Jerusalem.

Now the story of the Old Testament is at an end. Four hundred years of prophetic silence will follow. But Jerusalem has been rebuilt, and its inhabitants along with the inhabitants of the nearby village of Bethlehem wait for the King who is coming.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW (Nehemiah)

1. What was the position of Nehemiah? What new assignment and authority did he receive?
2. Why was another return to Jerusalem necessary?
3. What were the obstacles the Nehemiah faced in carrying out his assignment?
4. What are the tactics of the opposition in trying to prevent the building of the wall? How did Nehemiah deal with them?
5. Besides building the wall what great services did Nehemiah provide for the city and the nation?
6. What steps were taken to repopulate Jerusalem?
7. Describe the dedication of the walls.
8. What are the chronological problems in trying to follow the line of thought of the book of Nehemiah?

9. What are the most memorable scenes and words of the book of Nehemiah?

