

Exodus

Blessing during Bondage in Egypt

1:1¹ These² are the names³ of the sons of Israel⁴ who entered Egypt – each man with his household⁵ entered with Jacob: 1:2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, 1:3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, 1:4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. 1:5 All the people⁶ who were directly descended⁷ from Jacob numbered seventy.⁸ But

Joseph was already in Egypt,⁹ 1:6 and in time¹⁰ Joseph¹¹ and his brothers and all that generation died. 1:7 The Israelites,¹² however,¹³ were fruitful, increased greatly, multiplied, and became extremely strong,¹⁴ so that the land was filled with them.

1:8 Then a new king,¹⁵ who did not know

1 sn Chapter 1 introduces the theme of bondage in Egypt and shows the intensifying opposition to the fulfillment of promises given earlier to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The first seven verses announce the theme of Israel's prosperity in Egypt. The second section (vv. 8-14) reports continued prosperity in the face of deliberate opposition. The third section (vv. 15-21) explains the prosperity as divine favor in spite of Pharaoh's covert attempts at controlling the population. The final verse records a culmination in the developing tyranny and provides a transition to the next section – Pharaoh commands the open murder of the males. The power of God is revealed in the chapter as the people flourish under the forces of evil. However, by the turn of affairs at the end of the chapter, the reader is left with a question about the power of God – “What can God do?” This is good Hebrew narrative, moving the reader through tension after tension to reveal the sovereign power and majesty of the LORD God, but calling for faith every step of the way. See also D. W. Wicke, “The Literary Structure of Exodus 1:2–2:10,” *JSOT* 24 (1982): 99-107.

2 tn Heb “now these” or “and these.” The *vav* (ו) disjunctive marks a new beginning in the narrative begun in Genesis.

3 sn The name of the book of Exodus in the Hebrew Bible is שְׁמוֹת (*shemot*), the word for “Names,” drawn from the beginning of the book. The inclusion of the names at this point forms a literary connection to the book of Genesis. It indicates that the Israelites living in bondage had retained a knowledge of their ancestry, and with it, a knowledge of God's promise.

4 tn The expression בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (*bene yisra'el*, “sons of Israel”) in most places refers to the nation as a whole and can be translated “Israelites,” although traditionally it has been rendered “the children of Israel” or “the sons of Israel.” Here it refers primarily to the individual sons of the patriarch Israel, for they are named. But the expression is probably also intended to indicate that they are the Israelites (cf. Gen 29:1, “eastern people,” or “easterners,” lit., “sons of the east”).

5 tn Heb “a man and his house.” Since this serves to explain “the sons of Israel,” it has the distributive sense. So while the “sons of Israel” refers to the actual sons of the patriarch, the expression includes their families (cf. NIV, TEV, CEV, NLT).

6 tn The word נֶפֶשׁ (*nefesh*) is often translated “soul.” But the word refers to the whole person, the body with the soul, and so “life” or “person” is frequently a better translation.

7 tn The expression in apposition to נֶפֶשׁ (*nefesh*) literally says “those who went out from the loins of Jacob.” This distinguishes the entire company as his direct descendants.

8 sn Gen 46 describes in more detail Jacob's coming to Egypt with his family. The Greek text of Exod 1:5 and of Gen 46:27 and two Qumran manuscripts, have the number as seventy-five, counting the people a little differently. E. H. Merrill in conjunction with F. Delitzsch notes that the list in Gen 46 of those who entered Egypt includes Hezron and Hamul, who did so *in potentia*, since they were born after the family entered Egypt. Joseph's sons are also included, though they too were born in Egypt. “The list must not be pressed too literally” (E. H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 49).

9 tn Heb “and Joseph was in Egypt” (so ASV). The disjunctive word order in Hebrew draws attention to the fact that Joseph, in contrast to his brothers, did not come to Egypt at the same time as Jacob.

10 tn The text simply uses the *vav* (ו) consecutive with the preterite, “and Joseph died.” While this construction shows sequence with the preceding verse, it does not require that the death follow directly the report of that verse. In fact, readers know from the record in Genesis that the death of Joseph occurred after a good number of years. The statement assumes the passage of time in the natural course of events.

11 tn The verse has a singular verb, “and Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation.” Typical of Hebrew style the verb need only agree with the first of a compound subject.

sn Since the deaths of “Joseph and his brothers and all that generation” were common knowledge, their mention must serve some rhetorical purpose. In contrast to the flourishing of Israel, there is death. This theme will appear again: In spite of death in Egypt, the nation flourishes.

12 tn Heb “the sons of Israel.”

13 tn The disjunctive *vav* marks a contrast with the note about the deaths of the first generation.

14 tn Using מְאֹד (*m'od*) twice intensifies the idea of their becoming strong (see GKC 431-32 §133.k).

sn The text is clearly going out of its way to say that the people of Israel flourished in Egypt. The verbs פָּרַח (*parah*, “be fruitful”), and שָׁרַץ, רָבַח, רָבַח (*sharats*, “swarm, teem”), and נִצַּח (*atsam*, “be strong, mighty”) form a literary link to the creation account in Genesis. The text describes Israel's prosperity in the terms of God's original command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, to show that their prosperity was by divine blessing and in compliance with the will of God. The commission for the creation to fill the earth and subdue it would now begin to materialize through the seed of Abraham.

15 sn It would be difficult to identify who this “new king” might be, since the chronology of ancient Israel and Egypt is continually debated. Scholars who take the numbers in the Bible more or less at face value would place the time of Jacob's going down to Egypt in about 1876 b.c. This would put Joseph's experience in the period prior to the Hyksos control of Egypt (1720-1570's), and everything in the narrative about Joseph points to a native Egyptian setting and not a Hyksos one. Joseph's death, then, would have been around 1806 b.c., just a few years prior to the end of the 12th Dynasty of Egypt. This marked the end of the mighty Middle Kingdom of Egypt. The relationship between the Hyksos (also Semites) and the Israelites may have been amicable, and the Hyksos then might very well be the enemies that the Egyptians feared in Exodus 1:10. It makes good sense to see the new king who did not know Joseph as either the founder (Amosis, 1570-1546) or an early king of the powerful 18th Dynasty (like Thutmose I). Egypt under this new leadership drove out the Hyksos and reestablished Egyptian sovereignty. The new rulers certainly would have been concerned about an increasing Semite population in their territory (see E. H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 49-55).

about¹ Joseph, came to power² over Egypt. 1:9 He said³ to his people, “Look at⁴ the Israelite people, more numerous and stronger than we are! 1:10 Come, let’s deal wisely⁵ with them. Otherwise⁶ they will continue to multiply,⁷ and if⁸ a war breaks out, they will ally themselves⁹ with our enemies and fight against us and leave¹⁰ the country.”

1:11 So they put foremen¹¹ over the Israelites¹² to oppress¹³ them with hard labor. As a result¹⁴ they built Pithom and Rameses¹⁵ as store

cities for Pharaoh. 1:12 But the more the Egyptians¹⁶ oppressed them, the more they multiplied and spread.¹⁷ As a result the Egyptians loathed¹⁸ the Israelites, 1:13 and they¹⁹ made the Israelites serve rigorously.²⁰ 1:14 They made their lives bitter²¹ by²² hard service with mortar and bricks and by all kinds of service²³ in the fields. Every

¹ **tn** The relative clause comes last in the verse in Hebrew. It simply clarifies that the new king had no knowledge about Joseph. It also introduces a major theme in the early portion of Exodus, as a later Pharaoh will claim not to know who Yahweh is. The LORD, however, will work to make sure that Pharaoh and all Egypt will know that he is the true God.

² **tn** *Heb* “arose.”

³ **tn** *Heb* “and he said.”

⁴ **tn** The particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) introduces the foundational clause for the exhortation to follow by drawing the listeners’ attention to the Israelites. In other words, the exhortation that follows is based on this observation. The connection could be rendered “since, because,” or the like.

⁵ **tn** The verb is the Hitpael cohortative of חָכַם (*khakam*, “to be wise”). This verb has the idea of acting shrewdly, dealing wisely. The basic idea in the word group is that of skill. So a skillful decision is required to prevent the Israelites from multiplying any more.

⁶ **sn** Pharaoh’s speech invites evaluation. How wise did his plans prove to be?

⁷ **tn** The word פָּן (*pen*) expresses fear or precaution and can also be translated “lest” or “else” (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 75-76, §461).

⁸ **tn** The verb can be translated simply “will multiply,” but since Pharaoh has already indicated that he is aware they were doing that, the nuance here must mean to multiply all the more, or to continue to multiply. Cf. NIV “will become even more numerous.”

⁹ **tn** The words יִתְּרֶה כִּי (v⁹*hayah ki*) introduce a conditional clause – “if” (see GKC 335 §112.y).

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and [lest] he [Israel] also be joined to.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “and go up from.” All the verbs coming after the particle פָּן (*pen*, “otherwise, lest” in v. 10) have the same force and are therefore parallel. These are the fears of the Egyptians. This explains why a shrewd policy of population control was required. They wanted to keep Israel enslaved; they did not want them to become too numerous and escape.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “princes of work.” The word שָׂרֵי (*sare*, “princes”) has been translated using words such as “ruler,” “prince,” “leader,” “official,” “chief,” “commander,” and “captain” in different contexts. It appears again in 2:14 and 18:21 and 25. Hebrew מַס (*mas*) refers to a labor gang organized to provide unpaid labor, or corvée (Deut 20:11; Josh 17:13; 1 Kgs 9:15, 21). The entire phrase has been translated “foremen,” which combines the idea of oversight and labor. Cf. KJV, NAB, NASB, NRSV “taskmasters”; NIV “slave masters”; NLT “slave drivers.”

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “over them”; the referent (the Israelites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ **sn** The verb אָנְחָה (*annoto*) is the Piel infinitive construct from אָנַח (*anah*, “to oppress”). The word has a wide range of meanings. Here it would include physical abuse, forced subjugation, and humiliation. This king was trying to crush the spirit of Israel by increasing their slave labor. Other terms in the passage that describe this intent include “bitter” and “crushing.”

¹⁵ **tn** The form is a preterite with the *vav* (ו) consecutive, וַיִּבְנוּ (*vayyiven*). The sequence expressed in this context includes the idea of result.

¹⁶ **sn** Many scholars assume that because this city was named Rameses, the Pharaoh had to be Rameses II, and hence that a late date for the exodus (and a late time for the

sojourn in Egypt) is proved. But if the details of the context are taken as seriously as the mention of this name, this cannot be the case. If one grants for the sake of discussion that Rameses II was on the throne and oppressing Israel, it is necessary to note that Moses is not born yet. It would take about twenty or more years to build the city, then eighty more years before Moses appears before Pharaoh (Rameses), and then a couple of years for the plagues – this man would have been Pharaoh for over a hundred years. That is clearly not the case for the historical Rameses II. But even more determining is the fact that whoever the Pharaoh was for whom the Israelites built the treasure cities, he died before Moses began the plagues. The Bible says that when Moses grew up and killed the Egyptian, he fled from Pharaoh (whoever that was) and remained in exile until he heard that that Pharaoh had died. So this verse cannot be used for a date of the exodus in the days of Rameses, unless many other details in the chapters are ignored. If it is argued that Rameses was the Pharaoh of the oppression, then his successor would have been the Pharaoh of the exodus. Rameses reigned from 1304 B.C. until 1236 and then was succeeded by Merneptah. That would put the exodus far too late in time, for the Merneptah stela refers to Israel as a settled nation in their land. One would have to say that the name Rameses in this chapter may either refer to an earlier king, or, more likely, reflect an updating in the narrative to name the city according to its later name (it was called something else when they built it, but later Rameses finished it and named it after himself [see B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 14]). For further discussion see G. L. Archer, “An 18th Dynasty Ramses,” *JETS* 17 (1974): 49-50; and C. F. Aling, “The Biblical City of Ramses,” *JETS* 25 (1982): 129-37. Furthermore, for vv. 11-14, see K. A. Kitchen, “From the Brick Fields of Egypt,” *TynBul* 27 (1976): 137-47.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “they”; the referent (the Egyptians) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁸ **tn** The imperfect tenses in this verse are customary uses, expressing continual action in past time (see GKC 315 §107.e). For other examples of כְּאֲשֶׁר (*ka’asher*) with כֵּן (*ken*) expressing a comparison (“just as...so”) see Gen 41:13; Judg 1:7; Isa 31:4.

¹⁹ **tn** Nothing in the oppression caused this, of course. Rather, the blessing of God (Gen 12:1-3) was on Israel in spite of the efforts of Egypt to hinder it. According to Gen 15 God had foretold that there would be this period of oppression [אָנַח] (*anah*) in Gen 15:13). In other words, God had decreed and predicted both their becoming a great nation and the oppression to show that he could fulfill his promise to Abraham in spite of the bondage.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “they felt a loathing before/because of”; the referent (the Egyptians) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “the Egyptians.” For stylistic reasons this has been replaced by the pronoun “they” in the translation.

²² **tn** *Heb* “with rigor, oppression.”

²³ **sn** The verb מָרַר (*marar*) anticipates the introduction of the theme of bitterness in the instructions for the Passover.

²⁴ **tn** The preposition *bet* (ב) in this verse has the instrumental use: “by means of” (see GKC 380 §119.o).

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and in all service.”

kind of service the Israelites were required to give was rigorous.¹

1:15 The king of Egypt said² to the Hebrew midwives,³ one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah,⁴ **1:16**⁵ “When you assist⁶ the Hebrew women in childbirth, observe at the delivery:⁷ If it is a son, kill him,⁸ but if it is a daughter, she may live.”⁹ **1:17** But¹⁰ the midwives feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live.¹¹

1:18 Then the king of Egypt summoned¹² the midwives and said to them, “Why have you

done this and let the boys live?”¹³ **1:19** The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew¹⁴ women are not like the Egyptian women – for the Hebrew women¹⁵ are vigorous; they give birth before the midwife gets to them!”¹⁶ **1:20** So God treated the midwives well,¹⁷ and the people multiplied and became very strong. **1:21** And because the midwives feared God, he made¹⁸ households¹⁹ for them.

1:22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “All sons²⁰ that are born you must throw²¹ into the river, but all daughters you may let live.”²²

1 tn The line could be more literally translated, “All their service in which they served them [was] with rigor.” This takes the referent of בָּהֶם (*bahem*) to be the Egyptians. The pronoun may also resume the reference to the kinds of service and so not be needed in English: “All their service in which they served [was] with rigor.”

2 tn Heb “and the king of Egypt said.”

3 sn The word for “midwife” is simply the Piel participle of the verb יָלַד (*yalad*, “to give birth”). So these were women who assisted in the childbirth process. It seems probable that given the number of the Israelites in the passage, these two women could not have been the only Hebrew midwives, but they may have been over the midwives (Rashi). Moreover, the LXX and Vulgate do not take “Hebrew” as an adjective, but as a genitive after the construct, yielding “midwives of/over the Hebrews.” This leaves open the possibility that these women were not Hebrews. This would solve the question of how the king ever expected Hebrew midwives to kill Hebrew children. And yet, the two women have Hebrew names.

4 tn Heb “who the name of the first [was] Shiphrah, and the name of the second [was] Puah.”

5 tn The verse starts with the verb that began the last verse; to read it again seems redundant. Some versions render it “spoke” in v. 15 and “said” in v. 16. In effect, Pharaoh has been delayed from speaking while the midwives are named.

6 tn The form is the Piel infinitive construct serving in an adverbial clause of time. This clause lays the foundation for the next verb, the Qal perfect with a *vav* consecutive: “when you assist...then you will observe.” The latter carries an instructional nuance (= the imperfect of instruction), “you are to observe.”

7 tn Heb “at the birthstool” (cf. ASV, NASB, NRSV), but since this particular item is not especially well known today, the present translation simply states “at the delivery.” Cf. NIV “delivery stool.”

8 sn The instructions must have been temporary or selective, otherwise the decree from the king would have ended the slave population of Hebrews. It is also possible that the king did not think through this, but simply took steps to limit the population growth. The narrative is not interested in supplying details, only in portraying the king as a wicked fool bent on destroying Israel.

9 tn The last form מִתְּיָדָה (*vakhaya*) in the verse is unusual; rather than behaving as a III-He form, it is written as a geminate but without the *daghesh forte* in pause (GKC 218 §76. j). In the conditional clause, following the parallel instruction (“kill him”), this form should be rendered “she may live” or “let her live.”

10 tn Heb “and they [fem. pl.] feared”; the referent (the midwives) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

11 tn The verb is the Piel preterite of יָחַיָּה (*khaya*, “to live”). The Piel often indicates a factitive nuance with stative verbs, showing the cause of the action. Here it means “let live, cause to live.” The verb is the exact opposite of Pharaoh’s command for them to kill the boys.

12 tn The verb קָרָא (*qara*) followed by the *lamed* (ל) preposition has here the nuance of “summon.” The same construction is used later when Pharaoh summons Moses.

13 tn The second verb in Pharaoh’s speech is a preterite with a *vav* (ו) consecutive. It may indicate a simple sequence: “Why have you done...and (so that you) let live?” It could also indicate that this is a second question, “Why have you done ...[why] have you let live?”

14 sn See further N. Lemche, “‘Hebrew’ as a National Name for Israel,” *ST* 33 (1979): 1-23.

15 tn Heb “they”; the referent (the Hebrew women) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

16 tn Heb “before the midwife comes to them (and) they give birth.” The perfect tense with the *vav* consecutive serves as the apodosis to the preceding temporal clause; it has the frequentative nuance (see GKC 337-38 §112.oo).

sn The point of this brief section is that the midwives respected God above the king. They simply followed a higher authority that prohibited killing. Fearing God is a basic part of the true faith that leads to an obedient course of action and is not terrified by worldly threats. There probably was enough truth in what they were saying to be believable, but they clearly had no intention of honoring the king by participating in murder, and they saw no reason to give him a straightforward answer. God honored their actions.

17 tn The verb וַיַּטֵּב (*vayyetev*) is the Hiphil preterite of יָטַב (*yatav*). In this stem the word means “to cause good, treat well, treat favorably.” The *vav* (ו) consecutive shows that this favor from God was a result of their fearing and obeying him.

18 tn The temporal indicator וַיַּחֲיֵהוּ (*vay’hi*) focuses attention on the causal clause and lays the foundation for the main clause, namely, “God made households for them.” This is the second time the text affirms the reason for their defiance, their fear of God.

19 tn Or “families”; Heb “houses.”

20 tn The substantive כָּל (*kol*) followed by the article stresses the entirety – “all sons” or “all daughters” – even though the nouns are singular in Hebrew (see GKC 411 §127.b).

21 tn The form includes a pronominal suffix that reiterates the object of the verb: “every son...you will throw it.”

22 tn The first imperfect has the force of a definite order, but the second, concerning the girls, could also have the nuance of permission, which may fit better. Pharaoh is simply allowing the girls to live.

sn Verse 22 forms a fitting climax to the chapter, in which the king continually seeks to destroy the Israelite strength. Finally, with this decree, he throws off any subtlety and commands the open extermination of Hebrew males. The verse forms a transition to the next chapter, in which Moses is saved by Pharaoh’s own daughter. These chapters show that the king’s efforts to destroy the strength of Israel – so clearly a work of God – met with failure again and again. And that failure involved the efforts of women, whom Pharaoh did not consider a threat.

The Birth of the Deliverer

2:1¹ A man from the household² of Levi married³ a woman who was a descendant of Levi.⁴ 2:2 The woman became pregnant⁵ and gave birth to a son. When⁶ she saw that⁷ he was a healthy⁸ child, she hid him for three months. 2:3 But when she was no longer able to hide him, she took a papyrus basket⁹ for him and sealed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and set it among the reeds along the edge of the Nile.¹⁰

1 sn The chapter records the exceptional survival of Moses under the decree of death by Pharaoh (vv. 1-10), the flight of Moses from Pharaoh after killing the Egyptian (vv. 11-15), the marriage of Moses (vv. 16-22), and finally a note about the Lord's hearing the sighing of the people in bondage (vv. 23-25). The first part is the birth. The Bible has several stories about miraculous or special births and deliverances of those destined to lead Israel. Their impact is essentially to authenticate the individual's ministry. If the person's beginning was providentially provided and protected by the Lord, then the mission must be of divine origin too. In this chapter the plot works around the decree for the death of the children – a decree undone by the women. The second part of the chapter records Moses' flight and marriage. Having introduced the deliverer Moses in such an auspicious way, the chapter then records how this deliverer acted presumptuously and had to flee for his life. Any deliverance God desired had to be supernatural, as the chapter's final note about answering prayer shows.

2 tn Heb "house." In other words, the tribe of Levi.

3 tn Heb "went and took"; NASB "went and married."

4 tn Heb "a daughter of Levi." The word "daughter" is used in the sense of "descendant" and connects the new account with Pharaoh's command in 1:22. The words "a woman who was" are added for clarity in English.

5 sn The first part of this section is the account of hiding the infant (vv. 1-4). The marriage, the birth, the hiding of the child, and the positioning of Miriam, are all faith operations that ignore the decree of Pharaoh or work around it to preserve the life of the child.

5 tn Or "conceived" (KJV, ASV, NAB, NASB, NRSV).

6 tn A preterite form with the *vav* consecutive can be subordinated to a following clause. What she saw stands as a reason for what she did: "when she saw...she hid him three months."

7 tn After verbs of perceiving or seeing there are frequently two objects, the formal accusative ("she saw him") and then a noun clause that explains what it was about the child that she perceived ("that he was healthy"). See GKC 365 §117.h.

8 tn Or "fine" (אָרֵב, *ariv*). The construction is parallel to phrases in the creation narrative ("and God saw that it was good," Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 17, 21, 25, 31). B. Jacob says, "She looked upon her child with a joy similar to that of God upon His creation (Gen 1.4ff.)" (*Exodus*, 25).

9 sn See on the meaning of this basket C. Cohen, "Hebrew *tbh*: Proposed Etymologies," *JANESCU* 9 (1972): 36-51. This term is used elsewhere only to refer to the ark of Noah. It may be connected to the Egyptian word for "chest."

10 sn The circumstances of the saving of the child Moses have prompted several attempts by scholars to compare the material to the Sargon myth. See R. F. Johnson, *IDB* 3:440-50; for the text see L. W. King, *Chronicles concerning Early Babylonian Kings*, 2:87-90. Those who see the narrative using the Sargon story's pattern would be saying that the account presents Moses in imagery common to the ancient world's expectations of extraordinary achievement and deliverance. In the Sargon story the infant's mother set him adrift in a basket in a river; he was loved by the gods and destined for greatness. Saying Israel used this to invent the account in Exodus would undermine its reliability. But there are other difficulties with the Sargon comparison, not the least of which is the fact that the meaning and function of the Sargon story are unclear. Second, there is no outside threat to the child Sargon. The

2:4 His sister stationed herself¹¹ at a distance to find out¹² what would¹³ happen to him.

2:5 Then the daughter of Pharaoh¹⁴ came down to wash herself¹⁵ by the Nile, while her attendants were walking alongside the river,¹⁶ and she saw the basket among the reeds. She sent one of her attendants,¹⁷ took it,¹⁸ 2:6 opened it,¹⁹ and saw the child²⁰—a boy,²¹

account simply shows how a child was exposed, rescued, nurtured, and became king (see B. S. Childs, *Exodus* [OTL], 8-12). Third, other details do not fit: Moses' father is known, Sargon's is not; Moses is never abandoned, since he is never out of the care of his parents, and the finder is a princess and not a goddess. Moreover, without knowing the precise function and meaning of the Sargon story, it is almost impossible to explain its use as a pattern for the biblical account. By itself, the idea of a mother putting a child by the river if she wants him to be found would have been fairly sensible, for that is where the women of the town would be washing their clothes or bathing. If someone wanted to be sure the infant was discovered by a sympathetic woman, there would be no better setting (see R. A. Cole, *Exodus* [TOTC], 57). While there need not be a special genre of storytelling here, it is possible that Exodus 2 might have drawn on some of the motifs and forms of the other account to describe the actual event in the sparing of Moses – if they knew of it. If so it would show that Moses was cast in the form of the greats of the past.

11 tn Or "stood." The verb is the Hitpael preterite of יָצַב (*vat-sav*), although the form is anomalous and perhaps should be spelled as in the Samaritan Pentateuch (see GKC 193 §71). The form yields the meaning of "take a stand, position or station oneself." His sister found a good vantage point to wait and see what might become of the infant.

12 tn Heb "to know"; many English versions have "to see."

13 tn The verb is a Niphal imperfect; it should be classified here as a historic future, future from the perspective of a point in a past time narrative.

14 sn It is impossible, perhaps, to identify with certainty who this person was. For those who have taken a view that Rameses was the pharaoh, there were numerous daughters for Rameses. She is named Tharmuth in *Jub.* 47:5; Josephus spells it Thermouthis (*Ant.* 2.9.5 [2.224]), but Eusebius has Merris (*Praep. Ev.* ix. 27). E. H. Merrill (*Kingdom of Priests*, 60) makes a reasonable case for her identification as the famous Hatshepsut, daughter of Thutmose I. She would have been there about the time of Moses' birth, and the general picture of her from history shows her to be the kind of princess with enough courage to countermand a decree of her father.

15 tn Or "bathe."

16 sn A disjunctive *vav* initiates here a circumstantial clause. The picture is one of a royal entourage coming down to the edge of a tributary of the river, and while the princess was bathing, her female attendants were walking along the edge of the water out of the way of the princess. They may not have witnessed the discovery or the discussion.

17 tn The word here is אָמָה (*amah*), which means "female slave." The word translated "attendants" earlier in the verse is נָעִוִּיּוֹת (*na'arot*, "young women"), possibly referring here to an assortment of servants and companions.

18 tn The verb is preterite, third person feminine singular, with a pronominal suffix, from לָקַח (*laqakh*, "to take"). The form says literally "and she took it," and retains the princess as the subject of the verb.

19 tn Heb "and she opened."

20 tn The grammatical construction has a pronominal suffix on the verb as the direct object along with the expressed object: "and she saw him, the child." The second object defines the previous pronominal object to avoid misunderstanding (see GKC 425 §131.m).

21 tn The text has נָעִוִּיּוֹת (*na'ar*, "lad, boy, young man"), which in this context would mean a baby boy.

crying¹ – and she felt compassion² for him and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.”

2:7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and get³ a nursing woman⁴ for you from the Hebrews, so that she may nurse⁵ the child for you?” 2:8 Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Yes, do so.”⁶ So the young girl⁷ went and got⁸ the child’s mother.⁹ 2:9 Pharaoh’s

daughter said to her, “Take this child¹⁰ and nurse him for me, and I will pay your¹¹ wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed him.

2:10 When the child grew older¹² she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son.¹³ She named him Moses, saying, “Because I drew him from the water.”¹⁴

1 tn This clause is introduced with a disjunctive *vav* and the deictic particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, “behold” in the KJV). The particle in this kind of clause introduces the unexpected – what Pharaoh’s daughter saw when she opened the basket: “and look, there was a baby boy crying.” The clause provides a parenthetical description of the child as she saw him when she opened the basket and does not advance the narrative. It is an important addition, however, for it puts readers in the position of looking with her into the basket and explains her compassion.

2 tn The verb could be given a more colloquial translation such as “she felt sorry for him.” But the verb is stronger than that; it means “to have compassion, to pity, to spare.” What she felt for the baby was strong enough to prompt her to spare the child from the fate decreed for Hebrew boys. Here is part of the irony of the passage: What was perceived by many to be a womanly weakness – compassion for a baby – is a strong enough emotion to prompt the woman to defy the orders of Pharaoh. The ruler had thought sparing women was safe, but the midwives, the Hebrew mother, the daughter of Pharaoh, and Miriam, all work together to spare one child – Moses (cf. 1 Cor 1:27-29).

3 sn The text uses קָרָא (*qara*’), meaning “to call” or “summon.” Pharaoh himself will “summon” Moses many times in the plague narratives. Here the word is used for the daughter summoning the child’s mother to take care of him. The narratives in the first part of the book of Exodus include a good deal of foreshadowing of events that occur in later sections of the book (see M. Fishbane, *Biblical Text and Texture*).

4 tn The object of the verb “get/summon” is “a woman.” But מְנַעֲמָה (*meneaqet*, “nursing”), the Hiphil participle of the verb מָנַעַת (*manaq*, “to suck”), is in apposition to it, clarifying what kind of woman should be found – a woman, a nursing one. Of course Moses’ mother was ready for the task.

5 tn The form מְנַעֲמָה (*meneaqet*) is the Hiphil imperfect/jussive, third feminine singular, of the same root as the word for “nursing.” It is here subordinated to the preceding imperfect (“shall I go”) and perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive (“and summon”) to express the purpose: “in order that she may.”

sn No respectable Egyptian woman of this period would have undertaken the task of nursing a foreigner’s baby, and so the suggestion by Miriam was proper and necessary. Since she was standing a small distance away from the events, she was able to come forward when the discovery was made.

6 tn *Heb* “Go” (so KJV, ASV); NASB “Go ahead”; TEV “Please do.”

7 sn The word used to describe the sister (Miriam probably) is אַלְמָה (*alma*), the same word used in Isa 7:14, where it is usually translated either “virgin” or “young woman.” The word basically means a young woman who is ripe for marriage. This would indicate that Miriam is a teenager and so about fifteen years older than Moses.

8 tn *Heb* קָרָא (*qara*’), “called”.

9 sn During this period of Egyptian history the royal palaces were in the northern or Delta area of Egypt, rather than up the Nile as in later periods. The proximity of the royal residences to the Israelites makes this and the plague narratives all the more realistic. Such direct contact would have been unlikely if Moses had had to travel up the Nile to meet with Pharaoh. In the Delta area things were closer. Here all the people would have had access to the tributaries of the Nile near where the royal family came, but the royal family probably had pavilions and hunting lodges in the area. See also N. Osborn, “Where on Earth Are We? Problems of Position and Movement in Space,” *BT* 31 (1980): 239-42.

10 tn The verb is the Hiphil imperative of the verb הָלַךְ (*halakh*), and so is properly rendered “cause to go” or “take away.”

11 tn The possessive pronoun on the noun “wage” expresses the indirect object: “I will pay wages to you.”

12 tn The verb is the preterite of גָּדַל (*gadal*), and so might be rendered “and he became great.” But the context suggests that it refers to when he was weaned and before he was named, perhaps indicating he was three or four years old (see Gen 21:8).

13 tn The idiomatic expression literally reads: “and he was to her for a son.” In this there are two prepositions *lamed*. The first expresses possession: “he was to her” means “she had.” The second is part of the usage of the verb: הָיָה (*haya*) with the *lamed* (ל) preposition means “to become.”

14 sn The naming provides the climax and summary of the story. The name of “Moses” (מֹשֶׁה, *mōsheh*) is explained by “I have drawn him (מִשֵּׁיתוֹ, *mish’iitihu*) from the water.” It appears that the name is etymologically connected to the verb in the saying, which is from מָשַׁח (*mashah*, “to draw out”). But commentators have found it a little difficult that the explanation of the name by the daughter of Pharaoh is in Hebrew when the whole background is Egyptian (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 20). Moreover, the Hebrew spelling of the name is the form of the active participle (“the one who draws out”); to be a precise description it should have been spelled מְשַׁח (*mashuy*), the passive participle (“the one drawn out”). The etymology is not precise; rather, it is a wordplay (called *paronomasia*). Either the narrator merely attributed words to her (which is unlikely outside of fiction), or the Hebrew account simply translated what she had said into Hebrew, finding a Hebrew verb with the same sounds as the name. Such wordplays on names (also popular etymology) are common in the Bible. Most agree that the name is an Egyptian name. Josephus attempted to connect the biblical etymology with the name in Greek, *Mouses*, stating that *Mo* is Egyptian for water, and *uses* means those rescued from it (*Ant.* 2.9.6 [2.228]; see also J. Gwyn Griffiths, “The Egyptian Derivation of the Name Moses,” *JNES* 12 [1953]: 225). But the solution to the name is not to be derived from the Greek rendering. Due to the estimation Egyptians had of the Nile, the princess would have thought of the child from the river as a supernatural provision. The Egyptian hieroglyphic *ms* can be the noun “child” or the perfective verb “be born.” This was often connected with divine elements for names: Ptah-mose, “Ptah is born.” Also the name Rameses (*R’-m-sw*) means “[the god] Re’ is he who has born him.” If the name Moses is Egyptian, there are some philological difficulties (see the above article for their treatment). The significance of all this is that when the child was named by the princess, an Egyptian word related to *ms* was used, meaning something like “child” or “born.” The name might have even been longer, perhaps having a theophoric element (divine name) with it – “child of [some god].” The name’s motivation came from the fact that she drew him from the Nile, the source of life in Egypt. But the sound of the name recalled for the Hebrews the verb “to draw out” in their own language. Translating the words of the princess into Hebrew allowed for the effective wordplay to capture the significance of the story in the sound of the name. The implication for the Israelites is something to this effect: “You called him ‘born one’ in your language and after your custom, but in our language that name means ‘drawing out’ – which is what was to become of him. You drew him out of the water, but he would draw us out of Egypt through the water.” So the circumstances of the story show Moses to be a man of destiny, and this naming episode summarizes how divine providence was at work in Israel. To the Israelites the name forever commemorated the portent of this event in the early life of the great deliverer (see Isa 63:11).

The Presumption of the Deliverer

2:11¹ In those days,² when³ Moses had grown up, he went out to his people⁴ and observed⁵ their hard labor, and he saw an Egyptian man attacking⁶ a Hebrew man, one of his own people.⁷ 2:12 He looked this way and that⁸ and saw that no one was there,⁹ and then he attacked¹⁰ the Egyptian and concealed the body¹¹

¹ **sn** Chapter 1 described how Israel was flourishing in spite of the bondage. Chapter 2 first told how God providentially provided the deliverer, but now when this deliverer attempted to deliver one of his people, it turned out badly, and he had to flee for his life. This section makes an interesting study in the presumption of the leader, what Christian expositors would rightly describe as trying to do God's work by the flesh. The section has two parts to it: the flight from Egypt over the failed attempt to deliver (vv. 11-15), and Moses' introduction to life as the deliverer in Midian (vv. 16-22).

² **sn** The expression "those days" refers to the days of bondage.

³ **tn** The preterite with the *vav* (ו) consecutive is here subordinated to the next and main idea of the verse. This is the second use of this verb in the chapter. In v. 10 the verb had the sense of "when he began to grow" or "when he got older," but here it carries the nuance of "when he had grown up."

⁴ **tn** *Heb* "brothers." This term does not require them to be literal siblings, or even close family members. It simply refers to fellow Hebrews, people with whom Moses has begun to feel close ties of kinship. They are "brothers" in a broad sense, ultimately fellow members of the covenant community.

⁵ **tn** The verb רָאָה (*ra'a*, "to see") followed by the preposition *bet* (ב) can indicate looking on something as an overseer, or supervising, or investigating. Here the emphasis is on Moses' observing their labor with sympathy or grief. It means more than that he simply saw the way his fellow Hebrews were being treated (cf. 2:25).

sn This journey of Moses to see his people is an indication that he had become aware of his destiny to deliver them. This verse says that he looked on their oppression; the next section will say that the LORD looked on it.

⁶ **tn** The verb מָכָה (*makkeh*) is the Hiphil participle of the root נָכַח (*nakha*). It may be translated "strike, smite, beat, attack." It can be used with the sense of killing (as in the next verse, which says Moses hid the body), but it does not necessarily indicate here that the Egyptian killed the Hebrew.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "brothers." This kinship term is used as a means of indicating the nature of Moses' personal concern over the incident, since the appositional clause adds no new information.

⁸ **tn** The text literally says, "and he turned thus and thus" (וַיִּבֶן בְּהֵבֵה, *vayyifan koh vakhoh*). It may indicate that he turned his gaze in all directions to ascertain that no one would observe what he did. Or, as B. Jacob argues, it may mean that he saw that there was no one to do justice and so he did it himself (*Exodus*, 37-38, citing *Isa* 59:15-16).

⁹ **tn** *Heb* "he saw that there was no man."

¹⁰ **sn** The verb נָכַח (*vayyakh*) is from the root נָכַח (*nakhah*, "to smite, attack") which is used in v. 11. This new attack is fatal. The repetition of the verb, especially in *Exodus*, anticipates the idea of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth." The problem is, however, that Moses was not authorized to take this matter into his own hands in this way. The question the next day was appropriate: "Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?" The answer? No one – yet.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "him"; for stylistic reasons the referent has been specified as "the body."

in the sand. 2:13 When he went out¹² the next day,¹³ there were¹⁴ two Hebrew men fighting. So he said to the one who was in the wrong,¹⁵ "Why are you attacking¹⁶ your fellow Hebrew?"¹⁷

2:14 The man¹⁸ replied, "Who made you a ruler¹⁹ and a judge over us? Are you planning²⁰ to kill me like you killed that²¹ Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid, thinking,²² "Surely what I did²³ has become known." 2:15 When Pharaoh heard²⁴ about this event,²⁵ he sought to kill Moses. So Moses fled²⁶ from Pharaoh and

¹² **tn** The preterite with the *vav* consecutive is subordinated to the main idea of the verse.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "the second day" (so KJV, ASV).

¹⁴ **tn** The deictic particle is used here to predicate existence, as in "here were" or "there were." But this use of הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) indicates also that what he encountered was surprising or sudden – as in "Oh, look!"

¹⁵ **tn** The word רָשָׁע (*rasha'*) is a legal term, meaning the guilty. This guilty man rejects Moses' intervention for much the same reason Pharaoh will later (5:2) – he does not recognize his authority. Later Pharaoh will use this term to declare himself as in the wrong (9:27) and God in the right.

¹⁶ **tn** This is the third use of the verb נָכַח (*nakha*) in the passage; here it is the Hiphil imperfect. It may be given a progressive imperfect nuance – the attack was going on when Moses tried to intervene.

¹⁷ **sn** *Heb* "your neighbor." The word רֵעֵךְ (*re'ekha*) appears again in 33:11 to describe the ease with which God and Moses conversed. The Law will have much to say about how the Israelites were to treat their "neighbors, fellow citizens" (*Exod* 20:16-17; 21:14, 18, 35; 22:7-11, 14, 26; cf. *Luke* 10:25-37).

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "And he"; the referent (the man) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* "Who placed you for a man, a ruler and a judge over us?" The pleonasm does not need to be translated. For similar constructions see *Lev* 21:9; *Judg* 6:8; 2 *Sam* 1:13; *Esth* 7:6.

²⁰ **tn** The line reads "[is it] to kill me you are planning?" The form אָמַר (*'omer*) is the active participle used verbally; it would literally be "[are you] saying," but in this context it conveys the meaning of "thinking, planning." The Qal infinitive then serves as the object of this verbal form – are you planning to kill me?

²¹ **tn** *Heb* "the Egyptian." Here the Hebrew article functions in an anaphoric sense, referring back to the individual Moses killed.

²² **tn** The verb form is "and he said." But the intent of the form is that he said this within himself, and so it means "he thought, realized, said to himself." The form, having the *vav* consecutive, is subordinated to the main idea of the verse, that he was afraid.

²³ **tn** The term הַדְּבָר (*haddavar*, "the word [thing, matter, incident]") functions here like a pronoun to refer in brief to what Moses had done. For clarity this has been specified in the translation with the phrase "what I did."

²⁴ **tn** The form with the *vav* consecutive is here subordinated to the main idea that Pharaoh sought to punish Moses.

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* הַדְּבָר (*haddavar*, "the word [thing, matter, incident]") functions here like a pronoun to refer in brief to what Moses had done.

²⁶ **tn** The *vav* (ו) consecutive with the preterite shows result – as a result of Pharaoh's search for him, he fled.

settled in the land of Midian,¹ and he settled² by a certain well.³

2:16 Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and began to draw⁴ water⁵ and fill⁶ the troughs in order to water their father's flock. **2:17** When some⁷ shepherds came and drove them away,⁸ Moses came up and defended them⁹ and then watered their flock. **2:18** So when they came home¹⁰ to their father Reuel,¹¹ he asked, "Why have you come home so early¹² today?" **2:19** They said, "An Egyptian

man rescued us¹³ from the shepherds,¹⁴ and he actually¹⁵ drew water for us and watered the flock!" **2:20** He said¹⁶ to his daughters, "So where is he?¹⁷ Why in the world¹⁸ did you leave the man? Call him, so that he may eat¹⁹ a meal²⁰ with us."

2:21 Moses agreed²¹ to stay with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage.²² **2:22** When she bore²³ a son, Moses²⁴ named him Gershom, for he said, "I have become a resident foreigner in a foreign land."²⁵

1 sn The location of Midyan or Midian is uncertain, but it had to have been beyond the Egyptian borders on the east, either in the Sinai or beyond in the Arabah (south of the Dead Sea) or even on the east side of the Gulf of Aqaba. The Midianites seem to have traveled extensively in the desert regions. R. A. Cole (*Exodus* [TOTC], 60) reasons that since they later were enemies of Israel, it is unlikely that these traditions would have been made up about Israel's great lawgiver; further, he explains that "Ishmaelite" and "Kenite" might have been clan names within the region of Midian. But see, from a different point of view, G. W. Coats, "Moses and Midian," *JBL* 92 (1973): 3-10.

2 tn The verb reads "and he sat" or "and he lived." To translate it "he sat by a well" would seem anticlimactic and unconnected. It probably has the same sense as in the last clause, namely, that he lived in Midian, and he lived near a well, which detail prepares for what follows.

3 tn The word has the definite article, "the well." Gesenius lists this use of the article as that which denotes a thing that is yet unknown to the reader but present in the mind under the circumstances (GKC 407-8 §126.q-r). Where there was a well, people would settle, and as R. A. Cole says it, for people who settled there it was "the well" (*Exodus* [TOTC], 60).

4 tn The preterites describing their actions must be taken in an ingressive sense, since they did not actually complete the job. Shepherds drove them away, and Moses watered the flocks.

5 tn The object "water" is not in the Hebrew text, but is implied.

6 tn This also has the ingressive sense, "began to fill," but for stylistic reasons is translated simply "fill" here.

7 tn The definite article here is the generic use; it simply refers to a group of shepherds.

8 tn The actions of the shepherds are subordinated to the main statement about what Moses did.

9 sn The verb is *vaygorshum* (וַיְגֹרְשׁוּם). Some shepherds came and drove the daughters away. The choice of this verb in the narrative has a tie with the name of Moses' first son, Gershom. Moses senses very clearly that he is a sojourner in a strange land – he has been driven away.

9 sn The verb used here is *vayyoshi'an* (וַיַּיֹּשִׁיעַ אֹתוֹ), "and he saved them"). The word means that he came to their rescue and delivered them. By the choice of words the narrator is portraying Moses as the deliverer – he is just not yet ready to deliver Israel from its oppressors.

10 tn The verb means "to go, to come, to enter." In this context it means that they returned to their father, or came home.

11 sn The name "Reuel" is given here. In other places (e.g., chap. 18) he is called Jethro (cf. CEV, which uses "Jethro" here). Some suggest that this is simply a confusion of traditions. But it is not uncommon for ancients, like Sabeian kings and priests, to have more than one name. Several of the kings of Israel, including Solomon, did. "Reuel" means "friend of God."

12 tn The sentence uses a verbal hendiadys construction: *miharten bo* (מִיְהָרְתִּין בּוֹ), "you have made quick [to] come"). The finite verb functions as if it were an adverb modifying the infinitive, which becomes the main verb of the clause.

sn Two observations should be made at this point. First, it seems that the oppression at the well was a regular part of their routine because their father was surprised at their early

return, and their answer alluded to the shepherds rather automatically. Secondly, the story is another meeting-at-the-well account. Continuity with the patriarchs is thereby kept in the mind of the reader (cf. Gen 24; 29:1-12).

13 sn Continuing the theme of Moses as the deliverer, the text now uses another word for salvation (נָצַל, *natsal*, "to deliver, rescue") in the sense of plucking out or away, snatching out of danger.

14 tn Heb "from the hand of the shepherds" (so NASB); NAB "saved us from the interference of the shepherds." Most recent English versions translate simply "from the shepherds."

15 tn The construction is emphatic with the use of the perfect tense and its infinitive absolute: דָּלַח דָּלַח (*daloh dalah*). B. Jacob says, "They showed their enthusiasm through the use of the infinitive absolute – And think of that, *he even drew water for us*; a man did this for us girls" (*Exodus*, 41).

16 tn Heb "And he said."

17 tn The conjunction *vav* (ו) joins Reuel's question to what the daughters said as logically following with the idea, "If he has done all that you say, why is he not here for me to meet?" (see GKC 485 §154.b).

18 tn This uses the demonstrative pronoun as an enclitic, for emphasis (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 24, §118). The question reads more literally, "Why [is] *this* [that] you left him?"

19 tn The imperfect tense coming after the imperative indicates purpose.

20 tn Heb "bread," i.e., "food."

21 tn Or "and Moses was willing" to stay with Reuel. The Talmud understood this to mean that he swore, and so when it came time to leave he had to have a word from God and permission from his father-in-law (Exod 4:18-19).

22 tn The words "in marriage" are implied, and have been supplied in the translation for clarity.

23 tn The preterite with the *vav* (ו) consecutive is subordinated to the next clause, which reports the naming and its motivation.

24 tn Heb "and he called"; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

25 sn Like the naming of Moses, this naming that incorporates a phonetic wordplay forms the commemorative summary of the account just provided. Moses seems to have settled into a domestic life with his new wife and his father-in-law. But when the first son is born, he named him גֵרְשׁוֹם (*ger'shom*). There is little information available about what the name by itself might have meant. If it is linked to the verb "drive away" used earlier (גָּרַשׁ, *garash*), then the final *mem* (ם) would have to be explained as an enclitic *mem*. It seems most likely that that verb was used in the narrative to make a secondary wordplay on the name. The primary explanation is the popular etymology supplied by Moses himself. He links the name to the verb גָּר (*gur*, "to sojourn, to live as an alien"). He then adds that he was a sojourner (גֵר, *ger*, the participle) in a foreign land. The word "foreign" (גֵרִי, *nokhriyyah*) adds to the idea of his being a resident foreigner. The final syllable in the name would then be connected to the adverb "there" (שָׁם, *sham*). Thus, the name is given the significance in the story of "sojourner there" or "alien there." He no doubt knew that this was not the actual meaning of the name; the name itself had already been introduced into the family of Levi (1 Chr 6:1, 16). He chose the name because its sounds reflected his sentiment at that time. But to what was Moses referring? In view of naming customs among the Semites, he was most likely

The Call of the Deliverer

2:23¹ During² that long period of time³ the king of Egypt died, and the Israelites⁴ groaned because of the slave labor. They cried out, and their desperate cry⁵ because of their slave labor went up to God. 2:24 God heard their groaning,⁶ God remembered⁷ his covenant with Abraham,

referring to Midian as the foreign land. If Egypt had been the strange land, and he had now found his place, he would not have given the lad such a name. Personal names reflect the present or recent experiences, or the hope for the future. So this naming is a clear expression by Moses that he knows he is not where he is supposed to be. That this is what he meant is supported in the NT by Stephen (Acts 7:29). So the choice of the name, the explanation of it, and the wordplay before it, all serve to stress the point that Moses had been driven away from his proper place of service.

1 sn The next section of the book is often referred to as the “Call of Moses,” and that is certainly true. But it is much more than that. It is the divine preparation of the servant of God, a servant who already knew what his destiny was. In this section Moses is shown how his destiny will be accomplished. It will be accomplished because the divine presence will guarantee the power, and the promise of that presence comes with the important “I AM” revelation. The message that comes through in this, and other “I will be with you” passages, is that when the promise of God’s presence is correctly appropriated by faith, the servant of God can begin to build confidence for the task that lies ahead. It will no longer be, “Who am I that I should go?” but “I AM with you” that matters. The first little section, 2:23-25, serves as a transition and introduction, for it records the LORD’s response to Israel in her affliction. The second part is the revelation to Moses at the burning bush (3:1-10), which is one of the most significant theological sections in the Torah. Finally, the record of Moses’ response to the call with his objections (3:11-22), makes up the third part, and in a way, is a transition to the next section, where God supplies proof of his power.

2 tn The verse begins with the temporal indicator “And it was” (cf. KJV, ASV “And it came to pass”). This has been left untranslated for stylistic reasons.

3 tn Heb “in those many days.”

4 tn Heb “the sons of Israel.”

5 tn “They cried out” is from צָעַק (*za‘aq*), and “desperate cry” is from שָׁוָה (*shava’h*).

6 sn The word for this painfully intense “groaning” appears elsewhere to describe a response to having two broken arms (Ezek 30:24).

7 sn The two verbs “heard” and “remembered,” both preterites, say far more than they seem to say. The verb שָׁמַע (*shama’*, “to hear”) ordinarily includes responding to what is heard. It can even be found in idiomatic constructions meaning “to obey.” To say God heard their complaint means that God responded to it. Likewise, the verb זָכַר (*zakhar*, “to remember”) means to begin to act on the basis of what is remembered. A prayer to God that says, “Remember me,” is asking for more than mere recollection (see B. S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* [SBT], 1-8). The structure of this section at the end of the chapter is powerful. There are four descriptions of the Israelites, with a fourfold reaction from God. On the Israelites’ side, they groaned (אָנַח [anakh]) and cried out (צָעַק [za‘aq], שָׁוָה [shava’h]) to God. On the divine side God heard (שָׁמַע, *shama’*) their groaning, remembered (זָכַר, *zakhar*) his covenant, looked (רָאָה, *ra’ah*) at the Israelites, and took notice (יָדָה, *yada’*) of them. These verbs emphasize God’s sympathy and compassion for the people. God is near to those in need; in fact, the deliverer had already been chosen. It is important to note at this point the repetition of the word “God.” The text is waiting to introduce the name “Yahweh” in a special way. Meanwhile, the fourfold repetition of “God” in vv. 24-25 is unusual and draws attention to the statements about his attention to Israel’s plight.

with Isaac, and with Jacob, 2:25 God saw⁸ the Israelites, and God understood....⁹

3:1 Now Moses¹⁰ was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert¹¹ and came to the mountain of God, to Horeb.¹² **3:2** The angel of the LORD¹³ appeared¹⁴ to him in¹⁵ a flame of fire from within a bush.¹⁶ He looked¹⁷ – and¹⁸ the bush was ablaze with fire, but it was not being consumed!¹⁹ **3:3** So Moses

8 tn Heb “and God saw.”

9 tn Heb “and God knew” (יָדָה, *yada’*). The last clause contains a widely used verb for knowing, but it leaves the object unexpressed within the clause, so as to allow all that vv. 23-24 have described to serve as the compelling content of God’s knowing. (Many modern English versions supply an object for the verb following the LXX, which reads “knew them.”) The idea seems to be that God took personal knowledge of, noticed, or regarded them. In other passages the verb “know” is similar in meaning to “save” or “show pity.” See especially Gen 18:21, Ps 1:6; 31:7, and Amos 3:2. Exodus has already provided an example of the results of not knowing in 1:8 (cf. 5:2).

10 sn The *vav* (ו) disjunctive with the name “Moses” introduces a new and important starting point. The LORD’s dealing with Moses will fill the next two chapters.

11 tn Or “west of the desert,” taking אַחַר (*‘akhar*, “behind”) as the opposite of בְּרִיחַ (*al-p’ne*, “on the face of, east of”; cf. Gen 16:12; 25:18).

12 sn “Horeb” is another name for Mount Sinai. There is a good deal of foreshadowing in this verse, for later Moses would shepherd the people of Israel and lead them to Mount Sinai to receive the Law. See D. Skinner, “Some Major Themes of Exodus,” *Mid-America Theological Journal* 1 (1977): 31-42.

13 sn The designation “the angel of the LORD” (Heb “the angel of Yahweh”) occurred in Genesis already (16:7-13; 21:17; 22:11-18). There is some ambiguity in the expression, but it seems often to be interchangeable with God’s name itself, indicating that it refers to the LORD.

14 tn The verb יָרָא (*vayyera’*) is the Niphal preterite of the verb “to see.” For similar examples of רָאָה (*ra’ah*) in Niphal where the subject “appears,” that is, allows himself to be seen, or presents himself, see Gen 12:7; 35:9; 46:29; Exod 6:3; and 23:17. B. Jacob notes that God appears in this way only to individuals and never to masses of people; it is his glory that appears to the masses (*Exodus*, 49).

15 tn Gesenius rightly classifies this as a *bet* (ב) *essentiae* (GKC 379 §119.i); it would then indicate that Yahweh appeared to Moses “as a flame.”

16 sn Fire frequently accompanies the revelation of Yahweh in Exodus as he delivers Israel, guides her, and purifies her. The description here is unique, calling attention to the manifestation as a flame of fire from within the bush. Philo was the first to interpret the bush as Israel, suffering under the persecution of Egypt but never consumed. The Bible leaves the interpretation open. However, in this revelation the fire is coming from within the bush, not from outside, and it represents the LORD who will deliver his people from persecution. See further E. Levine, “The Evolving Symbolism of the Burning Bush,” *Dor le Dor* 8 (1979): 185-93.

17 tn Heb “And he saw.”

18 tn The text again uses the deictic particle with *vav*, רָבָה, הִינְנִה (*v^hhinneh*), traditionally rendered “and behold.” The particle goes with the intense gaze, the outstretched arm, the raised eyebrow – excitement and intense interest: “look, over there.” It draws the reader into the immediate experience of the subject.

19 tn The construction uses the suffixed negative אֵינִי נֹשֵׂם (*‘enu-nnu*) to convey the subject of the passive verb: “It was not” consumed. This was the amazing thing, for nothing would burn faster in the desert than a thornbush on fire.

thought,¹ “I will turn aside to see² this amazing³ sight. Why does the bush not burn up?”⁴ 3:4 When the LORD⁵ saw that⁶ he had turned aside to look, God called to him from within the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!”⁷ And Moses⁸ said, “Here I am.”⁹ 3:5 God⁹ said, “Do not approach any closer!¹⁰ Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy¹¹ ground.”¹² 3:6 He added, “I am the God of your father,¹³ the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look¹⁴

1 tn Heb “And Moses said.” The implication is that Moses said this to himself.

2 tn The construction uses the cohortative אֶסְרֶה־נָּא (*asuranna*) followed by an imperfect with *vav* (וַ, *er'eh*) to express the purpose or result (logical sequence): “I will turn aside in order that I may see.”

3 tn Heb “great.” The word means something extraordinary here. In using this term Moses revealed his reaction to the strange sight and his anticipation that something special was about to happen. So he turned away from the flock to investigate.

4 tn The verb is an imperfect. Here it has the progressive nuance – the bush is not burning up.

5 tn The preterite with the *vav* (ו) is subordinated as a temporal clause to the main point of the verse, that God called to him. The language is anthropomorphic, as if God’s actions were based on his observing what Moses did.

6 tn The particle כִּי (*ki*, “that”) introduces the noun clause that functions as the direct object of the verb “saw” (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 81, §490).

7 sn The repetition of the name in God’s call is emphatic, making the appeal direct and immediate (see also Gen 22:11; 46:2). The use of the personal name shows how specifically God directed the call and that he knew this person. The repetition may have stressed even more that it was indeed he whom the LORD wanted. It would have been an encouragement to Moses that this was in fact the LORD who was meeting him.

8 tn Heb “And he said”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

9 tn Heb “And he”; the referent (God) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

10 sn Even though the LORD was drawing near to Moses, Moses could not casually approach him. There still was a barrier between God and human, and God had to remind Moses of this with instructions. The removal of sandals was, and still is in the East, a sign of humility and reverence in the presence of the Holy One. It was a way of excluding the dust and dirt of the world. But it also took away personal comfort and convenience and brought the person more closely in contact with the earth.

11 sn The word קֹדֶשׁ (*qodesh*, “holy”) indicates “set apart, distinct, unique.” What made a mountain or other place holy was the fact that God chose that place to reveal himself or to reside among his people. Because God was in this place, the ground was different – it was holy.

12 tn The causal clause includes within it a typical relative clause, which is made up of the relative pronoun, then the independent personal pronoun with the participle, and then the preposition with the resumptive pronoun. It would literally be “which you are standing on it,” but the relative pronoun and the resumptive pronoun are combined and rendered, “on which you are standing.”

13 sn This self-revelation by Yahweh prepares for the revelation of the holy name. While no verb is used here, the pronoun and the predicate nominative are a construction used throughout scripture to convey the “I AM” disclosures – “I [am] the God of...” But the significant point here is the naming of the patriarchs, for this God is the covenant God, who will fulfill his promises.

14 tn The clause uses the Hiphil infinitive construct with a preposition after the perfect tense: יָרֵא מִפְּנֵי (yare' mehabbit,

at God.

3:7 The LORD said, “I have surely seen¹⁵ the affliction of my people who are in Egypt. I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.¹⁶ 3:8 I have come down¹⁷ to deliver them¹⁸ from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up from that land to a land that is both good and spacious,¹⁹ to a land flowing with milk and honey,²⁰ to the region of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites.²¹ 3:9 And now indeed²² the cry²³ of the Israelites has come to me, and I have also seen how severely the Egyptians oppress them.²⁴ 3:10 So now go, and I will send

“he was afraid from gazing”) meaning “he was afraid to gaze.” The preposition *min* (מִן) is used before infinitives after verbs like the one to complete the verb (see BDB 583 s.v. 7b).

15 tn The use of the infinitive absolute with the perfect tense intensifies the statement: I have surely seen – there is no doubt that I have seen and will do something about it.

16 sn Two new words are introduced now to the report of suffering: “affliction” and “pain/suffering.” These add to the dimension of the oppression of God’s people.

17 sn God’s coming down is a frequent anthropomorphism in Genesis and Exodus. It expresses his direct involvement, often in the exercise of judgment.

18 tn The Hiphil infinitive with the suffix יִרְצִינִי (*hatsilo*, “to deliver them”). It expresses the purpose of God’s coming down. The verb itself is used for delivering or rescuing in the general sense, and snatching out of danger for the specific.

19 tn Heb “to a land good and large”; NRSV “to a good and broad land.” In the translation the words “that is both” are supplied because in contemporary English “good and” combined with any additional descriptive term can be understood as elative (“good and large” = “very large”; “good and spacious” = “very spacious”; “good and ready” = “very ready”). The point made in the Hebrew text is that the land to which they are going is both good (in terms of quality) and large (in terms of size).

20 tn This vibrant description of the promised land is a familiar one. Gesenius classifies “milk and honey” as epexegetical genitives because they provide more precise description following a verbal adjective in the construct state (GKC 418-19 §128.x). The land is modified by “flowing,” and “flowing” is explained by the genitives “milk and honey.” These two products will be in abundance in the land, and they therefore exemplify what a desirable land it is. The language is hyperbolic, as if the land were streaming with these products.

21 tn Each people group is joined to the preceding by the *vav* conjunction, “and.” Each also has the definite article, as in other similar lists (3:17; 13:5; 34:11). To repeat the conjunction and article in the translation seems to put more weight on the list in English than is necessary to its function in identifying what land God was giving the Israelites.

22 tn The particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) focuses attention on what is being said as grounds for what follows.

23 tn The word is a technical term for the outcry one might make to a judge. God had seen the oppression and so knew that the complaints were accurate, and so he initiated the proceedings against the oppressors (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 59).

24 tn Heb “seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.” The word for the oppression is now לַחֲצוֹת (*lakhsat*), which has the idea of pressure with the oppression – squeezing, pressuring – which led to its later use in the Semitic languages for torture. The repetition in the Hebrew text of the root in the participle form after this noun serves to stress the idea. This emphasis has been represented in the translation by the expression “seen how severely the Egyptians oppress them.”

you⁴ to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”

3:11 Moses said² to God,³ “Who am I, that I should go⁴ to Pharaoh, or that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” **3:12** He replied,⁵ “Surely I will be with you,⁶ and this will be the sign⁷ to you that I have sent you: When you bring the people out of Egypt, you and they will serve⁸ God on this mountain.”

1 tn The verse has a sequence of volitives. The first form is the imperative לֵבֶה (l^hkhā, “go”). Then comes the cohortative/imperfect form with the vav (ו), “and I will send you” or more likely “that I may send you” (וְאֶשְׁלַחְכֶּחְךָ, v^heshlakhkha), which is followed by the imperative with the vav, “and bring out” or “that you may bring out” (וְהוֹצֵאתָ, v^hhotse’). The series of actions begins with Moses going. When he goes, it will be the LORD who sends him, and if the LORD sends him, it will be with the purpose of leading Israel out of Egypt.

sn These instructions for Moses are based on the preceding revelation made to him. The deliverance of Israel was to be God’s work – hence, “I will send you.” When God commissioned people, often using the verb “to send,” it indicated that they went with his backing, his power, and his authority. Moses could not have brought Israel out without this. To name this incident a commissioning, then, means that the authority came from God to do the work (compare John 3:2).

2 tn Heb “And Moses said.”

3 sn When he was younger, Moses was confident and impulsive, but now that he is older the greatness of the task makes him unsure. The remainder of this chapter and the next chapter record the four difficulties of Moses and how the LORD answers them (1:1-12, 13-22; then 4:1-9; and finally 4:10-17).

4 tn The imperfect tense אֶלֶךְ (‘elekh) carries the modal nuance of obligatory imperfect, i.e., “that I should go.” Moses at this point is overwhelmed with the task of representing God, and with his personal insufficiency, and so in honest humility questions the choice.

5 tn Heb “And he said”; the word “replied” clarifies for English readers that speaker is God.

6 tn The particle כִּי (ki) has the asseverative use here, “surely, indeed,” which is frequently found with oaths (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 73, §449). The imperfect tense אֶהְיֶה (‘ehyeh) could be rendered as the future tense, “I will be” or the present tense “I am” with you. The future makes the better sense in this case, since the subject matter is the future mission. But since it is a stative verb, the form will also lend itself nicely to explaining the divine name – he is the One who is eternally present – “I am with you always.”

sn Here is the introduction of the main motif of the commission, which will be the explanation of the divine name. It will make little difference who the servant is or what that servant’s abilities might be, if God is present. The mention of God’s presence is not a simple catch-phrase; it represents abundant provisions to the believer (see below on v. 14).

7 sn In view of Moses’ hesitancy, a sign is necessary to support the promise. A sign is often an unusual or miraculous event that introduces, authenticates, or illustrates the message. One expects a direct connection between the sign and the message (for a helpful discussion, see S. Porúbcan, “The Word ‘OT in Isaiah 7,14,” *CBQ* 22 [1960]: 144-49). In this passage the sign is a confirming one, i.e., when Israel worships at the mountain that will be the proof that God delivered them from Egypt. Thus, the purpose of the exodus that makes possible the worship will be to prove that it was God who brought it about. In the meantime, Moses will have to trust in Yahweh.

8 tn The verb תַּעֲבֹדוּ (ta’avadu, “you will serve”) is one of the foremost words for worship in the Torah. Keeping the commandments and serving Yahweh usually sum up the life of faith; the true worshiper seeks to obey him. The highest title anyone can have in the OT is “the servant of Yahweh.” The

3:13 Moses said⁹ to God, “If¹⁰ I go to the Israelites and tell them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’¹¹ – what should I say¹² to them?”

verb here could be rendered interpretively as “worship,” but it is better to keep it to the basic idea of serving because that emphasizes an important aspect of worship, and it highlights the change from Israel’s serving Egypt, which has been prominent in the earlier chapters. The words “and they” are supplied to clarify for English readers that the subject of the verb is plural (Moses and the people), unlike the other second person forms in vv. 10 and 12, which are singular.

sn This sign is also a promise from God – “you will serve God on this mountain.” It is given to Moses here as a goal, but a goal already achieved because it was a sign from God. Leading Israel out of Egypt would not be completed until they came to this mountain and served God. God does not give Moses details of what will take place on the road to Sinai, but he does give him the goal and glimpses of the defeat of Pharaoh. The rest will require Moses and the people to trust in this God who had a plan and who had the power to carry it out.

9 tn Heb “And Moses said.”

10 tn The particle הֲיִנְחֵה (hinneh) in this clause introduces the foundation for what comes later – the question. Moses is saying, “Suppose I do all this and they ask this question – what should I say?”

11 sn There has been considerable debate about the name of Yahweh in the Pentateuch, primarily because of theories that have maintained that the name Yahweh was not known in antiquity (see also 6:3 and notes there). The argument of this whole section nullifies that view. The idea that God’s name was revealed only here raises the question of what he was called earlier. The word “God” is not a name. “El Shaddai” is used only a few times in Genesis. But Israel would not have had a nameless deity – especially since Genesis says that from the very beginning people were making proclamation of the name of Yahweh (Gen 4:26; 12:8). It is possible that they did not always need a name if they were convinced that only he existed and there was no other God. But probably what Moses was anticipating was the Israelites’ wanting to be sure that Moses came with a message from their God, and that some sign could prove it. They would have known his name (Yahweh), and they would have known the ways that he had manifested himself. It would do no good for Moses to come with a new name for God, for that would be like introducing them to a new God. That would in no way authenticate to them Moses’ call, only confuse; after all, they would not be expecting a new name – they had been praying to their covenant God all along. They would want to be sure that their covenant God actually had sent Moses. To satisfy the Israelites Moses would have had to have been familiar with the name Yahweh – as they were – and know that he appeared to individuals. They would also want to know if Yahweh had sent Moses, how this was going to work in their deliverance, because they had been crying to him for deliverance. As it turned out, the Israelites had less problem with this than Moses anticipated – they were delighted when he came. It is likely that much of this concern was Moses’ own need for assurance that this was indeed the God of the fathers and that the promised deliverance was now to take place.

12 tn The imperfect tense here has a deliberative nuance (“should”), for Moses is wondering what would be best to say when the Israelites want proof of the calling.

3:14 God said to Moses, “I AM that I AM.”¹ And he said, “You must say this² to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” **3:15** God also said to Moses, “You must say this to the Israelites, ‘The LORD’³ – the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob – has sent me to you. This is my name⁴ forever, and this is my memorial from generation to generation.”⁵

3:16 “Go and bring together⁶ the elders of Israel and tell them, ‘The LORD, the God of your

fathers,⁷ appeared⁸ to me – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – saying, “I have attended carefully⁹ to you and to what has been done¹⁰ to you in Egypt, **3:17** and I have promised¹¹ that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites,¹² to a land flowing with milk and honey.”

3:18 “The elders¹³ will listen¹⁴ to you, and then you and the elders of Israel must go to the king of Egypt and tell him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met¹⁵ with us. So now, let us go¹⁶ three days’ journey into the wilderness,

1 tn The verb form used here is אָנֹכִי (*‘ehyeh*), the Qal imperfect, first person common singular, of the verb הָיָה (*haya*, “to be”). It forms an excellent paronomasia with the name. So when God used the verb to express his name, he used this form saying, “I AM.” When his people refer to him as Yahweh, which is the third person masculine singular form of the same verb, they say “he is.” Some commentators argue for a future tense translation, “I will be who I will be,” because the verb has an active quality about it, and the Israelites lived in the light of the promises for the future. They argue that “I AM” would be of little help to the Israelites in bondage. But a translation of “I will be” does not effectively do much more except restrict it to the future. The idea of the verb would certainly indicate that God is not bound by time, and while he is present (“I AM”) he will always be present, even in the future, and so “I AM” would embrace that as well (see also Ruth 2:13; Ps 50:21; Hos 1:9). The Greek translation of the OT used a participle to capture the idea, and several times in the Gospels Jesus used the powerful “I am” with this significance (e.g., John 8:58). The point is that Yahweh is sovereignly independent of all creation and that his presence guarantees the fulfillment of the covenant (cf. Isa 41:4; 42:6, 8; 43:10-11; 44:6; 45:5-7). Others argue for a causative Hiphil translation of “I will cause to be,” but nowhere in the Bible does this verb appear in Hiphil or Piel. A good summary of the views can be found in G. H. Parke-Taylor, *Yahweh, the Divine Name in the Bible*. See among the many articles: B. Beitzel, “Exodus 3:14 and the Divine Name: A Case of Biblical Paronomasia,” *TJ* 1 (1980): 5-20; C. D. Isbell, “The Divine Name *ehyeh* as a Symbol of Presence in Israelite Tradition,” *HAR* 2 (1978): 101-18; J. G. Janzen, “What’s in a Name? Yahweh in Exodus 3 and the Wider Biblical Context,” *Int* 33 (1979): 227-39; J. R. Lundbom, “God’s Use of the *Idem per Idem* to Terminate Debate,” *HTR* 71 (1978): 193-201; A. R. Millard, “Yw and Yhw Names,” *VT* 30 (1980): 208-12; and R. Youngblood, “A New Occurrence of the Divine Name ‘I AM,’” *JETS* 15 (1972): 144-52.

2 tn Or “Thus you shall say” (also in the following verse). The word “must” in the translation conveys the instructional and imperatival force of the statement.

3 sn Heb “Yahweh,” traditionally rendered “the LORD.” First the verb “I AM” was used (v. 14) in place of the name to indicate its meaning and to remind Moses of God’s promise to be with him (v. 12). Now in v. 15 the actual name is used for clear identification: “Yahweh...has sent me.” This is the name that the patriarchs invoked and proclaimed in the land of Canaan.

4 sn The words “name” and “memorial” are at the heart of the two parallel clauses that form a poetic pair. The Hebrew word “remembrance” is a poetical synonym for “name” (cf. Job 18:17; Ps 135:13; Prov 10:7; Isa 26:8) and conveys the idea that the nature or character of the person is to be remembered and praised (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 24).

5 tn The repetition of “generation” in this expression serves as a periphrasis for the superlative: “to the remotest generation” (GKC 432 §133.3).

6 tn The form is the perfect tense with the sequential *vav* (v) linking the nuance to the imperative that precedes it. Since the imperative calls for immediate action, this form either carries the same emphasis, or instructs action that immediately follows it. This applies likewise to “say,” which follows.

7 sn “The God of your fathers” is in simple apposition to the name “the LORD” (Heb “Yahweh”) as a recognizable identification. If the holy name were a new one to the Israelites, an explanation would have been needed. Meanwhile, the title “God of my/your/our father(s)” was widely used in the ancient Near East and also in Genesis (26:24; 28:13; 31:5, 29; 46:1, 3; N. M. Sarna, *Exodus* [JPSTC], 268).

8 tn The form is the Niphal perfect of the verb “to see.” See the note on “appeared” in 3:2.

9 tn The verb פָּקַד (*paqad*) has traditionally been rendered “to visit.” This only partially communicates the point of the word. When God “visited” someone, it meant that he intervened in their lives to change their circumstances or their destiny. When he visited the Amalekites, he destroyed them (1 Sam 15:2). When he visited Sarah, he provided the long awaited child (Gen 21:1). It refers to God’s active involvement in human affairs for blessing or for cursing. Here it would mean that God had begun to act to deliver the Israelites from bondage and give them the blessings of the covenant. The form is joined here with the infinitive absolute to underscore the certainty – “I have indeed visited you.” Some translate it “remember”; others say “watch over.” These do not capture the idea of intervention to bless, and often with the idea of vengeance or judgment on the oppressors. If God were to visit what the Egyptians did, he would stop the oppression and also bring retribution for it. The nuance of the perfect tense could be a perfect of resolve (“I have decided to visit”), or an instantaneous perfect (“I hereby visit”), or a prophetic perfect (“I have visited” = “I will visit”). The infinitive absolute reinforces the statement (so “carefully”), the rendering “attended to” attempts to convey the ideas of personal presence, mental awareness, and action, as when a nurse or physician “attends” a patient.

10 sn The same word was used in the same kind of construction at the end of Genesis (50:24) when Joseph promised, “God will surely visit you” (but there the imperfect tense with the infinitive absolute). Here is another link to the patriarchal narratives. This work of Moses would be interpreted as a fulfillment of Joseph’s prophecy.

11 tn The second object for the verb is the passive participle הַמַּעֲשִׂי (*he’asu*). To say that God has visited the oppression (or “attended to” it) affirms that God has decided to judge the oppressing people as he blesses Israel.

12 tn Heb “And I said.”

13 tn See the note on this list in 3:8.

14 tn Heb “And they will listen”; the referent (the elders) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

15 tn This is the combination of the verb שָׁמַע (*shama’*) followed by לְקוֹלֶךָ (*l’qolekha*), an idiomatic formation that means “listen to your voice,” which in turn implies a favorable response.

16 tn The verb נִצְרָה (*niqra*) has the idea of encountering in a sudden or unexpected way (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 25).

17 tn The form used here is the cohortative הֲלָכְךָ (*halakh*). It could be a resolve, but more likely before Pharaoh it is a request.

18 sn Was this a deceptive request if they were not planning on coming back? Since no one knows what the intent was, that question is not likely to be resolved. The request may

so that we may sacrifice¹ to the LORD our God.⁷ **3:19** But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go,² not even under force.³ **3:20** So I will extend my hand⁴ and strike Egypt with all my wonders⁵ that I will do among them, and after that he will release you.⁶

3:21 “I will grant this people favor with⁷ the Egyptians, so that when⁸ you depart you will not

leave empty-handed. **3:22** Every⁹ woman will ask her neighbor and the one who happens to be staying¹⁰ in her house for items of silver and gold¹¹ and for clothing. You will put these articles on your sons and daughters – thus you will plunder Egypt!”¹²

The Source of Sufficiency

4:1¹³ Moses answered again,¹⁴ “And if¹⁵ they do not believe me or pay attention to me,¹⁶ but say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you?’”

4:2 The LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” He said, “A staff.”¹⁷ **4:3** The LORD¹⁸ said, “Throw it to the ground.” So he threw it to

have been intended to test the waters, so to speak – How did Pharaoh feel about the Israelites? Would he let them go and worship their God as they saw fit? In any case, it gave him the opportunity to grant to the Israelites a permission that other groups are known to have received (N. M. Sarna, *Exodus* [JPSTC], 19).

¹ **tn** Here a cohortative with a *vav* (ו) follows a cohortative; the second one expresses purpose or result: “let us go...in order that we may.”

² **tn** After verbs of perception, as with “I know” here, the object may be a noun clause introduced with the particle *ki* (כי) – “I know that....” Gesenius observes that the object clause may have a kind of accusative and an infinitive construction (especially after *natn* [נתן] with the idea of “allow”): “he will not permit you to go” (see GKC 491 §157.b, n. 2).

³ **tn** Heb “and not with a mighty hand.” This expression (הַיָּד הַגְּדוֹלָה בְּיַד יְהוָה, *v^ehad khazaqa*) is unclear, since v. 20 says that God will stretch out his hand and do his wonders. Some have taken v. 19b to refer to God’s mighty hand also, meaning that the king would not let them go unless a mighty hand compels him (NIV). The expression “mighty hand” is used of God’s rescuing Israel elsewhere (Exod 6:1, 13:9, 32:11; but note also Num 20:20). This idea is a rather general interpretation of the words; it owes much to the LXX, which has “except by a mighty hand,” though “and not with” does not have the meaning of “except” or “unless” in other places. In view of these difficulties, others have suggested that v. 19b means “strong [threats]” from the Israelites (as in 4:24ff. and 5:3; see B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 81). This does not seem as convincing as the first view. Another possibility is that the phrase conveys Pharaoh’s point of view and intention; the Lord knows that Pharaoh plans to resist letting the Israelites go, regardless of the exercise of a strong hand against him (P. Addinall, “Exodus III 19B and the Interpretation of Biblical Narrative,” VT 49 [1999]: 289-300; see also the construction “and not with” in Num 12:8; 1 Sam 20:15 and elsewhere). If that is the case, v. 20 provides an ironic and pointed contradiction to Pharaoh’s plans as the Lord announces the effect that his hand will have. At any rate, Pharaoh will have to be forced to let Israel go.

⁴ **sn** The outstretched arm is a bold anthropomorphism. It describes the power of God. The Egyptians will later admit that the plagues were by the hand of God (Exod 8:19).

⁵ **tn** The word *nifl^o’otay* (נִפְלְאוֹתַי) does not specify what the intervention will be. As the text unfolds it will be clear that the plagues are intended. Signs and portents could refer to things people might do, but “wonders” only God could do. The root refers to that which is extraordinary, surpassing, amazing, difficult to comprehend. See Isa 9:6; Gen 18:14; Ps 139:6.

⁶ **sn** The two uses of the root *shalakh* (שָׁלַח) in this verse contribute to its force. When the Lord “sends” (Qal) his hand, Pharaoh will “send” (Piel) the Israelites out of Egypt.

⁷ **tn** Heb “in the eyes of.” This idiom usually means that someone will be treated well by the observer. It is unlikely that it means here that the Egyptians will like the Hebrews. Rather, it means that the Egyptians will give things to the Hebrews free – gratis (see 12:35-36). Not only will God do mighty works to make the king yield, but also he will work in the minds of the Egyptian people so that they will be favorably disposed to give Israel wealth.

⁸ **tn** The temporal indicator (here future) with the particle *ki* (כי) (וְהָיָה כִּי) introduces a temporal clause.

⁹ **tn** Heb “a woman,” one representing all.

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “from the sojourner.” Both the “neighbor” and the “sojourner” (“one who happens to be staying in her house”) are feminine. The difference between them seems to be primarily that the second is temporary, “a lodger” perhaps or “visitor,” while the first has permanent residence.

¹¹ **tn** Heb “vessels of silver and vessels of gold.” These phrases both use genitives of material, telling what the vessels are made of.

¹² **sn** It is clear that God intended the Israelites to plunder the Egyptians, as they might a defeated enemy in war. They will not go to “empty.” They will “plunder” Egypt. This verb (נָטַסְתֶּם [natsaltem]) usually means “rescue, deliver,” as if plucking out of danger. But in this stem it carries the idea of plunder. So when the text says that they will ask (וְשָׁאַלְתֶּם, *v^esha’alah*) their neighbors for things, it implies that they will be making many demands, and the Egyptians will respond like a defeated nation before victors. The spoils that Israel takes are to be regarded as back wages or compensation for the oppression (see also Deut 15:13). See further B. Jacob, “The Gifts of the Egyptians, a Critical Commentary,” *Journal of Reformed Judaism* 27 (1980): 59-69; and T. C. Vriezen, “A Reinterpretation of Exodus 3:21-22 and Related Texts,” *Ex Oriente Lux* 23 (1975): 389-401.

¹³ **sn** In chap. 3, the first part of this extensive call, Yahweh promises to deliver his people. At the hesitancy of Moses, God guarantees his presence will be with him, and that assures the success of the mission. But with chap. 4, the second half of the call, the tone changes sharply. Now Moses protests his inadequacies in view of the nature of the task. In many ways, these verses address the question, “Who is sufficient for these things?” There are three basic movements in the passage. The first nine verses tell how God gave Moses signs in case Israel did not believe him (4:1-9). The second section records how God dealt with the speech problem of Moses (4:10-12). And finally, the last section records God’s provision of a helper, someone who could talk well (4:13-17). See also J. E. Hamlin, “The Liberator’s Ordeal: A Study of Exodus 4:1-9,” *Rhetorical Criticism* [PTMS], 33-42.

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “and Moses answered and said.”

¹⁵ **tn** Or “What if.” The use of *hen* (הֵן) is unusual here, introducing a conditional idea in the question without a following consequence clause (see Exod 8:22 HT [8:26 ET]; Jer 2:10; 2 Chr 7:13). The Greek has “if not” but adds the clause “what shall I say to them?”

¹⁶ **tn** Heb “listen to my voice,” so as to respond positively.

¹⁷ **tn** Or “rod” (KJV, ASV); NCV, CEV “walking stick”; NLT “shepherd’s staff.”

sn The staff appears here to be the shepherd’s staff that he was holding. It now will become the instrument with which Moses will do the mighty works, for it is the medium of the display of the divine power (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 27; also, L. Shalit, “How Moses Turned a Staff into a Snake and Back Again,” *BAR* 9 [1983]: 72-73).

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “he”; the referent (the Lord) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

the ground, and it became a snake,⁴ and Moses ran from it. 4:4 But the LORD said to Moses, “Put out your hand and grab it by the tail” – so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand² – 4:5 “that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.”

4:6 The LORD also said to him, “Put your hand into your robe.”³ So he put his hand into his robe, and when he brought it out – there was his hand,⁴ leprous like snow!⁵ 4:7 He said, “Put your hand back into your robe.” So he put his hand back into his robe, and when he brought it out from his robe – there it was,⁶ restored⁷ like the rest of his skin!⁸ 4:8 “If⁹ they do not believe you or pay attention to¹⁰ the former sign, then they may¹¹ believe the latter sign.¹² 4:9 And if¹³ they do not believe even these two signs or listen to you,¹⁴ then take¹⁵ some water from the Nile and pour it out on the dry ground. The water you take out

of the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.”¹⁶

4:10 Then Moses said to the LORD,¹⁷ “O¹⁸ my Lord,¹⁹ I am not an eloquent man,²⁰ neither in the past²¹ nor since you have spoken to your servant, for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”²²

4:11 The LORD said to him, “Who gave²³ a mouth to man, or who makes a person mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?²⁴

16 sn This is a powerful sign, for the Nile was always known as the source of life in Egypt, but now it will become the evidence of death. So the three signs were alike, each consisting of life and death. They would clearly anticipate the struggle with Egypt through the plagues. The point is clear that in the face of the possibility that people might not believe, the servants of God must offer clear proof of the power of God as they deliver the message of God. The rest is up to God.

17 sn Now Moses took up another line of argumentation, the issue of his inability to speak fluently (vv. 10-17). The point here is that God’s servants must yield themselves as instruments to God, the Creator. It makes no difference what character traits they have or what weaknesses they think they have (Moses manages to speak very well) if God is present. If the sovereign God has chosen them, then they have everything that God intended them to have.

18 tn The word בִּי (*bi*) is a particle of entreaty; it seeks permission to speak and is always followed by “my lord” or “my Lord.” Often rendered “please,” it is “employed in petitions, complaints and excuses” (W. H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18* [AB], 213).

19 tn The designation in Moses’ address is אֲדֹנָי (*’adonay*), a term of respect and deference such as “lord, master, sir” but pointed as it would be when it represents the tetragrammaton. B. Jacob says since this is the first time Moses spoke directly to Yahweh, he did so hesitatingly (*Exodus*, 87).

20 tn When a noun clause is negated with לֹא (*lo’*), rather than אֵין (*’en*), there is a special emphasis, since the force of the negative falls on a specific word (GKC 479 §152.d). The expression “eloquent man” is אִישׁ דְּבָרִים (*ish d’varim*, “a man of words”). The genitive may indicate a man characterized by words or a man who is able to command or control words. Moses apparently is resigned to the fact that he can do the signs, but he knows the signs have to be explained.

21 tn Heb “also from yesterday also from three days ago” or “neither since yesterday nor since before that” is idiomatic for “previously” or “in the past.”

22 tn The two expressions are כְּבֶהֱמָה (*kh^evad peh*, “heavy of mouth”), and כְּבֶהֱמָה לָשׁוֹן (*kh^evad lashon*, “heavy of tongue”). Both use genitives of specification, the mouth and the tongue being what are heavy – slow. “Mouth” and “tongue” are metonymies of cause. Moses is saying that he has a problem speaking well. Perhaps he had been too long at the other side of the desert, or perhaps he was being a little dishonest. At any rate, he has still not captured the meaning of God’s presence. See among other works, J. H. Tigay, “‘Heavy of Mouth’ and ‘Heavy of Tongue’: On Moses’ Speech Difficulty,” *BASOR* 231 (1978): 57-67.

23 tn The verb שִׂים (*sim*) means “to place, put, set”; the sentence here more precisely says, “Who put a mouth into a man?”

sn The argumentation by Moses is here met by Yahweh’s rhetorical questions. They are intended to be sharp – it is reproof for Moses. The message is twofold. First, Yahweh is fully able to overcome all of Moses’ deficiencies. Second, Moses is exactly the way that God intended him to be. So the rhetorical questions are meant to prod Moses’ faith.

24 sn The final question obviously demands a positive answer. But the clause is worded in such a way as to return to the theme of “I AM.” Isaiah 45:5-7 developed this same idea of God’s control over life. Moses protests that he is not an eloquent speaker, and the LORD replies with reminders about himself and promises, “I will be with your mouth,” an assertion that repeats the verb he used four times in 3:12 and 14 and in promises to Isaac and Jacob (Gen 26:3; 31:3).

1 sn The details of the verse are designed to show that there was a staff that became a snake. The question is used to affirm that there truly was a staff, and then the report of Moses running from it shows it was a genuine snake. Using the serpent as a sign would have had an impact on the religious ideas of Egypt, for the sacred cobra was one of their symbols.

2 sn The signs authenticated Moses’ ministry as the LORD’s emissary. This sign will show that the LORD had control over Egypt and its stability, over life and death. But first Moses has to be convinced that he can turn it into a dead stick again.

3 tn The word חֵיק (*kheq*), often rendered “bosom,” refers to the front of the chest and a fold in the garment there where an item could be placed for carrying (see Prov 6:27; 16:33; 21:14). So “into your robe” should be understood loosely here and in v. 7 as referring to the inside of the top front of Moses’ garment. The inside chest pocket of a jacket is a rough modern equivalent.

4 tn The particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) points out the startling or amazing sight as if the reader were catching the first glimpse of it with Moses.

5 sn This sudden skin disease indicated that God was able to bring such diseases on Egypt in the plagues and that only he could remove them. The whitening was the first stage of death for the diseased (Num 12:10; 2 Kgs 5:27). The Hebrew words traditionally rendered “leprous” or “leprosy,” as they are used in Lev 13 and 14, encompass a variety of conditions, not limited to the disease called leprosy and identified as Hansen’s disease in modern times.

6 tn The particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) points out the startling or amazing sight as if the reader were catching the first glimpse of it with Moses.

7 tn Heb “it returned.”

8 tn Heb “like his flesh.”

9 tn Heb “and it will be if.”

10 tn Heb “listen to the voice of,” meaning listen so as to respond appropriately.

11 tn The nuance of this perfect tense with a *vav* (ו) consecutive will be equal to the imperfect of possibility – “they may believe.”

12 tn Heb “believe the voice of the latter sign,” so as to understand and accept the meaning of the event.

13 tn Heb “and it will be if.”

14 tn Heb “listen to your voice.”

15 tn The verb form is the perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) consecutive; it functions then as the equivalent of the imperfect tense – here as an imperfect of instruction.

4:12 So now go, and I will be with your mouth¹ and will teach you² what you must say.³

4:13 But Moses said,⁴ “O⁵ my Lord, please send anyone else whom you wish to send!”⁶

4:14 Then the LORD became angry with⁷ Moses, and he said, “What about⁸ your brother Aaron the Levite?⁹ I know that he can speak very well.¹⁰ Moreover, he is coming¹¹ to meet you,

and when he sees you he will be glad in his heart.¹²

4:15 “So you are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And as for me, I will be with your mouth¹³ and with his mouth,¹⁴ and I will teach you both¹⁵ what you must do.¹⁶ 4:16 He¹⁷ will speak for you to the people, and it will be as if¹⁸ he¹⁹ were your mouth²⁰ and as if you were his God.²¹ 4:17 You will also take in your hand this staff, with which you will do the signs.”²²

The Return of Moses

4:18²³ So Moses went back²⁴ to his father-in-law Jethro and said to him, “Let me go, so that I may return²⁵ to my relatives²⁶ in Egypt and see²⁷ if they are still alive.” Jethro said to Moses, “Go

¹ sn The promise of divine presence always indicates intervention (for blessing or cursing). Here it means that God would be working through the organs of speech to help Moses speak. See Deut 18:18; Jer 1:9.

² sn The verb is הוֹרִיתִיךָ (*horetikha*), the Hiphil perfect with a *vav* (ו) consecutive. The form carries the instructional meaning because it follows the imperative “go.” In fact, there is a sequence at work here: “go...and/that I may teach you.” It is from יָרָה (*yara*), the same root behind תּוֹרָה (*torah*, “law”). This always referred to teaching either wisdom or revelation. Here Yahweh promises to teach Moses what to say.

³ tn The form is the imperfect tense. While it could be taken as a future (“what you will say”), an obligatory imperfect captures the significance better (“what you must say” or “what you are to say”). Not even the content of the message will be left up to Moses.

⁴ tn Heb “And he said”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁵ tn The word בִּי (*bi*) is a particle of entreaty; it seeks permission to speak and is always followed by “Lord” or “my Lord.”

⁶ tn The text has simply שְׁלַחְךָ בְּיָדִי אֶת־שִׁלְיִי (sh^llakh-na’ b^yad ishlahk, “send by the hand you will send”). This is not Moses’ resignation to doing God’s will – it is his final attempt to avoid the call. It carries the force of asking God to send someone else. This is an example of an independent relative clause governed by the genitive: “by the hand of – whomever you will send” (see GKC 488-89 §155.n).

⁷ tn Heb “and the anger of Yahweh burned against.”

sn Moses had not dared openly to say “except me” when he asked God to send whomever he wanted to send. But God knew that is what he meant. Moses should not have resisted the call or pleaded such excuses or hesitated with such weak faith. Now God abandoned the gentle answer and in anger brought in a form of retribution. Because Moses did not want to do this, he was punished by not having the honor of doing it alone. His reluctance and the result are like the refusal of Israel to enter the land and the result they experienced (see U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 49-50).

⁸ tn Heb “Is not” or perhaps “Is [there] not.”

⁹ sn S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 29) suggests that the term “Levite” may refer to a profession rather than ancestry here, because both Moses and Aaron were from the tribe of Levi and there would be little point in noting that ancestry for Aaron. In thinking through the difficult problem of the identity of Levites, he cites McNeile as saying “the Levite” referred to one who had had official training as a priest (cf. Judg 17:7, where a member of the tribe of Judah was a Levite). If it was the duty of the priest to give “torah” – to teach – then some training in the power of language would have been in order.

¹⁰ tn The construction uses the Piel infinitive absolute and the Piel imperfect to express the idea that he spoke very well: דַּבֵּר דַּבֵּר (dabbery^edabber).

sn Now Yahweh, in condescending to Moses, selects something that Moses (and God) did not really need for the work. It is as if he were saying: “If Moses feels speaking ability is so necessary (rather than the divine presence), then that is what he will have.” Of course, this golden-tongued Aaron had some smooth words about how the golden calf was forged!

¹¹ tn The participle הֹנֵה (*hinneh*) with the participle points to the imminent future; it means “he is about to come” or “here he is coming.”

¹² sn It is unlikely that this simply means that as a brother he will be pleased to see Moses, for the narrative has no time for that kind of comment. It is interested in more significant things. The implication is that Aaron will rejoice because of the revelation of God to Moses and the plan to deliver Israel from bondage (see B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 93).

¹³ tn Or “I will help you speak.” The independent pronoun puts emphasis (“as for me”) on the subject (“I”).

¹⁴ tn Or “and will help him speak.”

¹⁵ tn The word “both” is supplied to convey that this object (“you”) and the subject of the next verb (“you must do”) are plural in the Hebrew text, referring to Moses and Aaron. In 4:16 “you” returns to being singular in reference to Moses.

¹⁶ tn The imperfect tense carries the obligatory nuance here as well. The relative pronoun with this verb forms a noun clause functioning as the direct object of “I will teach.”

¹⁷ tn The word “he” represents the Hebrew independent pronoun, which makes the subject emphatic.

¹⁸ tn The phrase “as if” is supplied for clarity.

¹⁹ tn Heb “and it will be [that] he, he will be to you for a mouth,” or more simply, “he will be your mouth.”

²⁰ tn Heb “he will be to you for a mouth.”

²¹ tn The phrase “as if” is supplied for clarity. The word “you” represents the Hebrew independent pronoun, which makes the subject emphatic.

sn Moses will be like God to Aaron, giving him the words to say, inspiring him as God would inspire a prophet. The whole process had now been removed one step. Instead of God speaking to Moses and Moses telling the people, Aaron would be the speaker for a while. But God was still going to work through Moses.

²² sn Mention of the staff makes an appropriate ending to the section, for God’s power (represented by the staff) will work through Moses. The applicable point that this whole section is making could be worded this way: The servants of God who sense their inadequacy must demonstrate the power of God as their sufficiency.

²³ sn This last section of the chapter reports Moses’ compliance with the commission. It has four parts: the decision to return (18-20), the instruction (21-23), the confrontation with Yahweh (24-26), and the presentation with Aaron (27-31).

²⁴ tn The two verbs form a verbal hendiadys, the second verb becoming adverbial in the translation: “and he went and he returned” becomes “and he went back.”

²⁵ tn There is a sequence here with the two cohortative forms: אֲלֵכֶּה נָא אֶת־אֲשֻׁרָה (el^lkha nna’ v^eashuva) – “let me go in order that I may return.”

²⁶ tn Heb “brothers.”

²⁷ tn This verb is parallel to the preceding cohortative and so also expresses purpose: “let me go that I may return...and that I may see.”

in peace.” 4:19 The LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back¹ to Egypt, because all the men who were seeking your life are dead.”² 4:20 Then Moses took³ his wife and sons⁴ and put them on a donkey and headed back⁵ to the land of Egypt, and Moses took the staff of God in his hand. 4:21 The LORD said⁶ to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt,⁷ see that you⁸ do before Pharaoh all the wonders I have put under your control.⁹ But I will harden¹⁰ his heart¹¹ and¹² he will

not let the people go. 4:22 You must say¹³ to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says¹⁴ the LORD, ‘Israel is my son, my firstborn,¹⁵ 4:23 and I said to you, ‘Let my son go that he may serve¹⁶ me,’ but since you have refused to let him go,¹⁷ I will surely kill¹⁸ your son, your firstborn!’”¹⁹

4:24 Now on the way, at a place where they stopped for the night,¹⁹ the LORD met Moses and sought to kill him.²⁰ 4:25 But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off the foreskin of her son and touched it to Moses’ feet,²¹ and said, “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood²² to me.” 4:26 So

1 tn The text has two imperatives, “Go, return”; if these are interpreted as a hendiadys (as in the translation), then the second is adverbial.

2 sn The text clearly stated that Pharaoh sought to kill Moses; so this seems to be a reference to Pharaoh’s death shortly before Moses’ return. Moses was forty years in Midian. In the 18th dynasty, only Pharaoh Thutmose III had a reign of the right length (1504-1450 B.C.) to fit this period of Moses’ life. This would place Moses’ returning to Egypt near 1450 B.C., in the beginning of the reign of Amenhotep II, whom most conservatives identify as the pharaoh of the exodus. Rameses II, of course, had a very long reign (1304-1236). But if he were the one from whom Moses fled, then he could not be the pharaoh of the exodus, but his son would be – and that puts the date of the exodus after 1236, a date too late for anyone. See E. H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 62.

3 tn Heb “And Moses took.”

4 sn Only Gershom has been mentioned so far. The other son’s name will be explained in chapter 18. The explanation of Gershom’s name was important to Moses’ sojourn in Midian. The explanation of the name Eliezer fits better in the later chapter (18:2-4).

5 tn The verb would literally be rendered “and returned”; however, the narrative will record other happenings before he arrived in Egypt, so an ingressive nuance fits here – he began to return, or started back.

6 tn Heb “And Yahweh said.”

7 tn The construction may involve a verbal hendiadys using the two infinitive forms: “when you go to return” (בְּלִבְיָהוּ לָשׁוּב, *b’lekhv’kha lashuv*). The clause is temporal, subordinated to the instruction to do the signs. Therefore, its focus cannot be on going to return, i.e., preparing or beginning to return.

8 tn The two verb forms in this section are the imperative (רָאָה, *r’eh*) followed by the perfect with the *vav* (וַעֲשִׂיתָם, *va’asitam*). The second could be coordinated and function as a second command: “see...and [then] do”; or it could be subordinated logically: “see...so that you do.” Some commentators who take the first option suggest that Moses was supposed to contemplate these wonders before doing them before Pharaoh. That does not seem as likely as the second interpretation reflected in the translation.

9 tn Or “in your power”; Heb “in your hand.”

10 tn Heb “strengthen” (in the sense of making stubborn or obstinate). The text has the expression וְאֲנִי אֶמְצָק אֶת־לִבּוֹ (va’ani akhazzeq et-libbo), “I will make strong his will,” or “I will strengthen his resolve,” recognizing the “heart” as the location of decision making (see Prov 16:1, 9).

11 sn Here is the first mention of the hardening of the heart of Pharaoh. God first tells Moses he must do the miracles, but he also announces that he will harden Pharaoh’s heart, as if working against Moses. It will help Moses to know that God is bringing about the resistance in order to bring a greater victory with greater glory. There is a great deal of literature on this, but see among the resources F. W. Danker, “Hardness of Heart: A Study in Biblical Thematic,” *CTM* 44 (1973): 89-100; R. R. Wilson, “The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart,” *CBQ* 41 (1979): 18-36; and R. B. Chisholm Jr., “Divine Hardening in the Old Testament,” *BSac* 153 (1996): 410-34.

12 tn Or “so that.”

13 tn The sequence of the instruction from God uses the perfect tense with *vav* (וַ), following the preceding imperatives.

14 tn The instantaneous use of the perfect tense fits well with the prophetic announcement of what Yahweh said or says. It shows that the words given to the prophet are still binding.

15 sn The metaphor uses the word “son” in its connotation of a political dependent, as it was used in ancient documents to describe what was intended to be a loyal relationship with well-known privileges and responsibilities, like that between a good father and son. The word can mean a literal son, a descendant, a chosen king (and so, the Messiah), a disciple (in Proverbs), and here, a nation subject to God. If the people of Israel were God’s “son,” then they should serve him and not Pharaoh. Malachi reminds people that the Law said “a son honors his father,” and so God asked, “If I am a father, where is my honor?” (Mal 1:6).

16 tn The text uses the imperative, “send out” (שְׁלַח, *shal-lakh*) followed by the imperfect or jussive with the *vav* (וַ) to express purpose.

17 tn The Piel infinitive serves as the direct object of the verb, answering the question of what Pharaoh would refuse to do. The command and refusal to obey are the grounds for the announcement of death for Pharaoh’s son.

18 tn The construction is very emphatic. The particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) gives it an immediacy and a vividness, as if God is already beginning to act. The participle with this particle has the nuance of an imminent future act, as if God is saying, “I am about to kill.” These words are not repeated until the last plague.

19 tn Or “at a lodging place” or “at an inn.”

20 sn The next section (vv. 24-26) records a rather strange story. God had said that if Pharaoh would not comply he would kill his son – but now God was ready to kill Moses, the representative of Israel, God’s own son. Apparently, one would reconstruct that on the journey Moses fell seriously ill, but his wife, learning the cause of the illness, saved his life by circumcising her son and casting the foreskin at Moses’ feet (indicating that it was symbolically Moses’ foreskin). The point is that this son of Abraham had not complied with the sign of the Abrahamic covenant. No one, according to Exod 12:40-51, would take part in the Passover-exodus who had not complied. So how could the one who was going to lead God’s people not comply? The bold anthropomorphisms and the location at the border invite comparisons with Gen 32, the Angel wrestling with Jacob. In both cases there is a brush with death that could not be forgotten. See also, W. Dumbrell, “Exodus 4:24-25: A Textual Re-examination,” *HTR* 65 (1972): 285-90; T. C. Butler, “An Anti-Moses Tradition,” *JSOT* 12 (1979): 9-15; and L. Kaplan, “And the Lord Sought to Kill Him,” *HAR* 5 (1981): 65-74.

21 tn Heb “to his feet.” The referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity. The LXX has “and she fell at his feet” and then “the blood of the circumcision of my son stood.” But it is clear that she caused the foreskin to touch Moses’ feet, as if the one were a substitution for the other, taking the place of the other (see U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 60).

22 sn U. Cassuto explains that she was saying, “I have delivered you from death, and your return to life makes you my bridegroom a second time, this time my blood bridegroom, a bridegroom acquired through blood” (*Exodus*, 60-61).

the LORD¹ let him alone. (At that time² she said, “A bridegroom of blood,” referring to³ the circumcision.)

4:27 The LORD said⁴ to Aaron, “Go to the wilderness to meet Moses. So he went and met him at the mountain of God⁵ and greeted him with a kiss.⁶ **4:28** Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had⁷ sent him and all the signs that he had commanded him. **4:29** Then Moses and Aaron went and brought together all the Israelite elders.⁸ **4:30** Aaron spoke⁹ all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people, **4:31** and the people believed. When they heard¹⁰ that the LORD had attended to¹¹ the Israelites and that he

had seen their affliction, they bowed down close to the ground.¹²

Opposition to the Plan of God

5:1¹³ Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “Thus says the LORD,¹⁴ the God of Israel, ‘Release¹⁵ my people so that they may hold a pilgrim feast¹⁶ to me in the desert.’” **5:2** But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD¹⁷ that¹⁸ I should obey him¹⁹ by releasing²⁰ Israel? I do not know the LORD,²¹ and I will not release Israel!”

¹ **tn** Heb “he”; the referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

² **tn** Or “Therefore.” The particle אַז (“az) here is not introducing the next item in a series of events. It points back to the past (“at that time,” see Gen 4:26) or to a logical connection (“therefore, consequently”).

³ **tn** The Hebrew simply has לְמִילוֹת (*lammulot*, “to the circumcision[s]”). The phrase explains that the saying was in reference to the act of circumcision. Some scholars speculate that there was a ritual prior to marriage from which this event and its meaning derived. But it appears rather that if there was some ancient ritual, it would have had to come from this event. The difficulty is that the son is circumcised, not Moses, making the comparative mythological view untenable. Moses had apparently not circumcised Eliezer. Since Moses was taking his family with him, God had to make sure the sign of the covenant was kept. It may be that here Moses sent them all back to Jethro (18:2) because of the difficulties that lay ahead.

⁴ **tn** Heb “And Yahweh said.”

⁵ **tn** S. R. Driver considers that this verse is a continuation of vv. 17 and 18 and that Aaron met Moses before Moses started back to Egypt (*Exodus*, 33). The first verb, then, might have the nuance of a past perfect: Yahweh had said.

⁶ **tn** Heb “and kissed him.”

⁷ **tn** This verb and the last one in the verse are rendered with the past perfect nuance because they refer to what the LORD had done prior to Moses’ telling Aaron.

⁸ **sn** These are the leaders of the tribes who represented all the people. Later, after the exodus, Moses will select the most capable of them and others to be rulers in a judicial sense (*Exod* 18:21).

⁹ **tn** Heb “And Aaron spoke.”

¹⁰ **tc** The LXX (Greek OT) has “and they rejoiced,” probably reading וַיִּשְׂמְחוּ (*vayyism^hkhu*) instead of what the MT reading, וַיִּשְׂמְעוּ (*vayyism^eu*, “and they heard”). To rejoice would have seemed a natural response of the people at the news, and the words sound similar in Hebrew.

tn The form is the preterite with the *vav* consecutive, “and they heard.” It clearly is a temporal clause subordinate to the following verbs that report how they bowed and worshiped. But it is also in sequence to the preceding: they believed, and then they bowed when they heard.

¹¹ **tn** Or “intervened for.” The word פָּקַד (*paqad*) has traditionally been translated “visited,” which is open to many interpretations. It means that God intervened in the life of the Israelites to bless them with the fulfillment of the promises. It says more than that he took notice of them, took pity on them, or remembered them. He had not yet fulfilled the promises, but he had begun to act by calling Moses and Aaron. The translation “attended to” attempts to capture that much.

¹² **tn** The verb וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ (*vayyish^takhavuu*) is usually rendered “worshipped.” More specifically, the verbal root חָוָה (*khava*) in the *hish^taphel* stem means “to cause oneself to be low to the ground.” While there is nothing wrong with giving it a general translation of “worship,” it may be better in a passage like this to take it in conjunction with the other verb (“bow”) as a verbal hendiads, using it as an adverb to that verb. The implication is certainly that they prayed, or praised, and performed some other aspect of worship, but the text may just be describing it from their posture of worship. With this response, all the fears of Moses are swept aside – they believed and they were thankful to God.

¹³ **sn** The enthusiasm of the worshipers in the preceding chapter turns sour in this one when Pharaoh refuses to cooperate. The point is clear that when the people of God attempt to devote their full service and allegiance to God, they encounter opposition from the world. Rather than finding instant blessing and peace, they find conflict. This is the theme that will continue through the plague narratives. But what makes chapter 5 especially interesting is how the people reacted to this opposition. The chapter has three sections: first, the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh (vv. 1-5); then the report of the stern opposition of the king (vv. 6-14); and finally, the sad account of the effect of this opposition on the people (vv. 15-21).

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “Yahweh.”

¹⁵ **tn** The form שְׁלַח (*shallakh*), the Piel imperative, has been traditionally translated “let [my people] go.” The Qal would be “send”; so the Piel “send away, release, dismiss, discharge.” B. Jacob observes, “If a person was dismissed through the use of this verb, then he ceased to be within the power or sphere of influence of the individual who had dismissed him. He was completely free and subsequently acted entirely on his own responsibility” (*Exodus*, 115).

¹⁶ **tn** The verb כָּחַג (*khagag*) means to hold a feast or to go on a pilgrim feast. The Arabic cognate of the noun form is *haj*, best known for the pilgrim flight of Mohammed, the *hajira*. The form in the text יַחְגְּגוּ (*yakh^hoggu*) is subordinated to the imperative and thus shows the purpose of the imperative.

¹⁷ **tn** Heb “Yahweh.” This is a rhetorical question, expressing doubt or indignation or simply a negative thought that Yahweh is nothing (see *erotesis* in E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 944-45). Pharaoh is not asking for information (cf. 1 Sam 25:5-10).

¹⁸ **tn** The relative pronoun introduces the consecutive clause that depends on the interrogative clause (see GKC 318-19 §107.u).

¹⁹ **tn** The imperfect tense here receives the classification of obligatory imperfect. The verb שָׁמַע (*shama*) followed by “in the voice of” is idiomatic; rather than referring to simple audition – “that I should hear his voice” – it conveys the thought of listening that issues in action – “that I should obey him.”

sn The construction of these clauses is similar to (ironically) the words of Moses: “Who am I that I should go?” (3:11).

²⁰ **tn** The Piel infinitive construct here has the expegetical usage with *lamed* (ל); it explains the verb “obey.”

²¹ **sn** This absolute statement of Pharaoh is part of a motif that will develop throughout the conflict. For Pharaoh, the LORD (Yahweh) did not exist. So he said “I do not know the LORD [i.e., Yahweh].” The point of the plagues and the exodus will be “that he might know.” Pharaoh will come to know this Yahweh, but not in any pleasant way.

5:3 And they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Let us go a three-day journey¹ into the desert so that we may sacrifice² to the LORD our God, so that he does not strike us with plague or the sword.”³ 5:4 The king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you cause the people to refrain from their work?⁴ Return to your labor!” 5:5 Pharaoh was thinking,⁵ “The people of the land are now many, and you are giving them rest from their labor.”

5:6 That same day Pharaoh commanded⁶ the slave masters and foremen⁷ who were⁸ over the people.⁹ 5:7 “You must no longer¹⁰ give straw to

the people for making bricks¹¹ as before.¹² Let them go¹³ and collect straw for themselves. 5:8 But you must require¹⁴ of them the same quota of bricks that they were making before.¹⁵ Do not reduce it, for they are slackers.¹⁶ That is why they are crying, ‘Let us go sacrifice to our God.’ 5:9 Make the work harder¹⁷ for the men so they will keep at it¹⁸ and pay no attention to lying words!”¹⁹

5:10 So the slave masters of the people and their foremen went to the Israelites and said,²⁰ “Thus says Pharaoh: ‘I am not giving²¹ you straw. 5:11 You²² go get straw for yourselves wherever you can²³ find it, because there will be no reduction at all in your workload.’” 5:12 So

¹ tn The word “journey” is an adverbial accusative telling the distance that Moses wanted the people to go. It is qualified by “three days.” It is not saying that they will be gone three days, but that they will go a distance that will take three days to cover (see Gen 31:22-23; Num 10:33; 33:8).

² tn The purpose clause here is formed with a second cohortative joined with a *vav* (ו): “let us go...and let us sacrifice.” The purpose of the going was to sacrifice.

sn Where did Moses get the idea that they should have a pilgrim feast and make sacrifices? God had only said they would serve Him in that mountain. In the OT the pilgrim feasts to the sanctuary three times a year incorporated the ideas of serving the LORD and keeping the commands. So the words here use the more general idea of appearing before their God. They would go to the desert because there was no homeland yet. Moses later spoke of the journey as necessary to avoid offending Egyptian sensibilities (8:25-26).

³ sn The last clause of this verse is rather unexpected here: “lest he meet [afflict] us with pestilence or sword.” To fail to comply with the summons of one’s God was to invite such calamities. The Law would later incorporate many such things as the curses for disobedience. Moses is indicating to Pharaoh that there is more reason to fear Yahweh than Pharaoh.

⁴ sn The clause is a rhetorical question. Pharaoh is not asking them why they do this, but rather is accusing them of doing it. He suspects their request is an attempt to get people time away from their labor. In Pharaoh’s opinion, Moses and Aaron were “removing the restraint” (בָּרַעַ, *para*) of the people in an effort to give them rest. Ironically, under the Law the people would be expected to cease their labor when they went to appear before God. He would give them the rest that Pharaoh refused to give. It should be noted also that it was not Israel who doubted that Yahweh had sent Moses, as Moses had feared – but rather Pharaoh.

⁵ tn Heb “And Pharaoh said.” This is not the kind of thing that Pharaoh is likely to have said to Moses, and so it probably is what he thought or reasoned within himself. Other passages (like Exod 2:14; 3:3) show that the verb “said” can do this. (See U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 67.)

⁶ tn Heb “and Pharaoh commanded on that day.”

⁷ tn The Greek has “scribes” for this word, perhaps thinking of those lesser officials as keeping records of the slaves and the bricks.

⁸ tn The phrase “who were” is supplied for clarity.

⁹ sn In vv. 6-14 the second section of the chapter describes the severe measures by the king to increase the labor by decreasing the material. The emphasis in this section must be on the harsh treatment of the people and Pharaoh’s reason for it – he accuses them of idleness because they want to go and worship. The real reason, of course, is that he wants to discredit Moses (v. 9) and keep the people as slaves.

¹⁰ tn The construction is a verbal hendiadys: לֹא תִשָּׁמַר לָתֶּךָ (lo’ to’sifum latet, “you must not add to give”). The imperfect tense acts adverbially, and the infinitive becomes the main verb of the clause: “you must no longer give.”

¹¹ tn The expression “for making bricks” is made of the infinitive construct followed by its cognate accusative: לִבְנוֹת הַבְּרִיקִים (*libbon hall’venim*).

¹² tn Heb “as yesterday and three days ago” or “as yesterday and before that.” This is idiomatic for “as previously” or “as in the past.”

¹³ tn The jussive יֵלְכוּ (*yel’khu*) and its following sequential verb would have the force of decree and not permission or advice. He is telling them to go and find straw or stubble for the bricks.

¹⁴ tn The verb is the Qal imperfect of שָׂים (*sim*, “place, put”). The form could be an imperfect of instruction: “You will place upon them the quota.” Or, as here, it may be an obligatory imperfect: “You must place.”

¹⁵ tn Heb “yesterday and three days ago” or “yesterday and before that” is idiomatic for “previously” or “in the past.”

¹⁶ tn Or “loafers.” The form נִרְפִּים (*nirpim*) is derived from the verb רָפַח (*rafah*), meaning “to be weak, to let oneself go.” They had been letting the work go, Pharaoh reasoned, and being idle is why they had time to think about going to worship.

¹⁷ tn Heb “let the work be heavy.”

¹⁸ tn The text has תִּשְׁמַרְהֶם (tishmar’hem, “and let them work in it”) or the like. The jussive forms part of the king’s decree that the men not only be required to work harder but be doing it: “Let them be occupied in it.”

sn For a discussion of this whole section, see K. A. Kitchen, “From the Brickfields of Egypt,” *TynBul* 27 (1976): 137-47.

¹⁹ sn The words of Moses are here called “lying words” (דְּבַר־שֶׁקֶר, *divre-shaquer*). Here is the main reason, then, for Pharaoh’s new policy. He wanted to discredit Moses. So the words that Moses spoke Pharaoh calls false and lying words. The world was saying that God’s words were vain and deceptive because they were calling people to a higher order. In a short time God would reveal that they were true words.

²⁰ tn Heb “went out and spoke to the people saying.” Here “the people” has been specified as “the Israelites” for clarity.

²¹ tn The construction uses the negative particle combined with a subject suffix before the participle: אֵינִי נֹתֵן (*enenni noten*, “there is not I – giving”).

²² tn The independent personal pronoun emphasizes that the people were to get their own straw, and it heightens the contrast with the king. “You – go get.”

²³ tn The tense in this section could be translated as having the nuance of possibility: “wherever you may find it,” or the nuance of potential imperfect: “wherever you are able to find any.”

the people spread out⁴ through all the land of Egypt to collect stubble for straw. **5:13** The slave masters were pressuring² them, saying, “Complete³ your work for each day, just like when there was straw!” **5:14** The Israelite foremen whom Pharaoh’s slave masters had set over them were beaten and were asked,⁴ “Why did you not complete your requirement for brickmaking as in the past – both yesterday and today?”⁵

5:15⁶ The Israelite foremen went and cried out to Pharaoh, “Why are you treating⁷ your servants this way? **5:16** No straw is given to your servants, but we are told,⁸ ‘Make bricks!’ Your servants are even⁹ being beaten, but the fault¹⁰ is with your people.”

5:17 But Pharaoh replied,¹¹ “You are slackers! Slackers!¹² That is why you are saying, ‘Let us go sacrifice to the LORD.’ **5:18** So now, get back to work!¹³ You will not be given straw, but you must still produce¹⁴ your quota¹⁵ of bricks!” **5:19** The Israelite foremen saw¹⁶ that they¹⁷ were in trouble when they were told,¹⁸ “You must not reduce the daily quota of your bricks.”

5:20 When they went out from Pharaoh, they encountered Moses and Aaron standing there to meet them,¹⁹ **5:21** and they said to them, “May the LORD look on you and judge,²⁰ because you have made us stink²¹ in the opinion of²² Pharaoh

¹ **tn** The verb *vayyafets* (וַיַּפֶּטֶס) is from the hollow root *פּוּץ* (*puts*) and means “scatter, spread abroad.”

² **tn** Or “pressed.”

³ **tn** *kali* (כָּלִי) is the Piel imperative; the verb means “to finish, complete” in the sense of filling up the quota.

⁴ **tn** The quotation is introduced with the common word *le’mor* (לֵאמֹר, “saying”) and no mention of who said the question.

⁵ **sn** The idioms for time here are found also in 3:10 and 5:7-8. This question no doubt represents many accusations shouted at Israelites during the period when it was becoming obvious that, despite all their efforts, they were unable to meet their quotas as before.

⁶ **sn** The last section of this event tells the effect of the oppression on Israel, first on the people (15-19) and then on Moses and Aaron (20-21). The immediate reaction of Israel was to cry to Pharaoh – something they would learn should be directed to God. When Pharaoh rebuffed them harshly, they turned bitterly against their leaders.

⁷ **tn** The imperfect tense should be classified here with the progressive imperfect nuance, because the harsh treatment was a present reality.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “[they] are saying to us,” the line can be rendered as a passive since there is no expressed subject for the participle.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* *hinneh* (הִנֵּה) draws attention to the action reflected in the passive participle *mukkim* (מִקִּים): “look, your servants are being beaten.”

¹⁰ **tn** The word rendered “fault” is the basic OT verb for “sin” – *khata* (חָטָא). The problem is that it is pointed as a perfect tense, feminine singular verb. Some other form of the verb would be expected, or a noun. But the basic word-group means “to err, sin, miss the mark, way, goal.” The word in this context seems to indicate that the people of Pharaoh – the slave masters – have failed to provide the straw. Hence: “fault” or “they failed.” But, as indicated, the line has difficult grammar, for it would literally translate: “and you [fem.] sin your people.” Many commentators (so GKC 206 §74.g) wish to emend the text to read with the Greek and the Syriac, thus: “you sin against your own people” (meaning the Israelites are his loyal subjects).

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “And he said.”

¹² **tn** Or “loafers.” The form *nirpim* (נִרְפִּים) is derived from the verb *rafah* (רָפָה), meaning “to be weak, to let oneself go.”

¹³ **tn** The text has two imperatives: “go, work.” They may be used together to convey one complex idea (so a use of hendiadys): “go back to work.”

¹⁴ **tn** The imperfect *tittenu* (תִּתְנֶנּוּ) is here taken as an obligatory imperfect: “you must give” or “you must produce.”

¹⁵ **sn** B. Jacob is amazed at the wealth of this tyrant’s vocabulary in describing the work of others. Here, *tokhen* (תֹּכֶן) is another word for “quota” of bricks, the fifth word used to describe their duty (*Exodus*, 137).

¹⁶ **tn** The common Hebrew verb translated “saw,” like the common English verb for seeing, is also used to refer to mental perception and understanding, as in the question “See what I mean?” The foremen understood how difficult things would be under this ruling.

¹⁷ **tn** The text has the sign of the accusative with a suffix and then a prepositional phrase: *otam b’ra’* (’*otam b’ra’*), meaning something like “[they saw] them in trouble” or “themselves in trouble.” Gesenius shows a few examples where the accusative of the reflexive pronoun is represented by the sign of the accusative with a suffix, and these with marked emphasis (GKC 439 §135.k).

¹⁸ **tn** The clause “when they were told” translates *le’mor* (לֵאמֹר), which usually simply means “saying.” The thing that was said was clearly the decree that was given to them.

¹⁹ **sn** Moses and Aaron would not have made the appeal to Pharaoh that these Hebrew foremen did, but they were concerned to see what might happen, and so they waited to meet the foremen when they came out.

²⁰ **tn** The foremen vented their anger on Moses and Aaron. The two jussives express their desire that the evil these two have caused be dealt with. “May Yahweh look on you and may he judge” could mean only that God should decide if Moses and Aaron are at fault, but given the rest of the comments it is clear the foremen want more. The second jussive could be subordinated to the first – “so that he may judge [you].”

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “you have made our aroma stink.”

²² **tn** *Heb* “in the eyes of.”

and his servants,¹ so that you have given them an excuse to kill us!”²

The Assurance of Deliverance

5:22³ Moses returned⁴ to the LORD, and said, “Lord,⁵ why have you caused trouble for this people?⁶ Why did you ever⁷ send me? 5:23 From the time I went to speak to Pharaoh in your name, he has caused trouble⁸ for this people, and you have

certainly not rescued⁹ them!”¹⁰

6:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh,¹¹ for compelled by my strong hand¹² he will release them, and by my strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”¹³

6:2 God spoke¹⁴ to Moses and said to him, “I am the LORD.¹⁵ 6:3 I appeared to Abraham, to

¹ **tn** Heb “in the eyes of his servants.” This phrase is not repeated in the translation for stylistic reasons.

² **tn** Heb “to put a sword in their hand to kill us.” The infinitive construct with the *lamed* (לְתַתּוֹ, *lalet*) signifies the result (“so that”) of making the people stink. Their reputation is now so bad that Pharaoh might gladly put them to death. The next infinitive could also be understood as expressing result: “put a sword in their hand so that they can kill us.”

³ **sn** In view of the apparent failure of the mission, Moses seeks Yahweh for assurance. The answer from Yahweh not only assures him that all is well, but that there will be a great deliverance. The passage can be divided into three parts: the complaint of Moses (5:22-23), the promise of Yahweh (6:1-9), and the instructions for Moses (6:10-13). Moses complains because God has not delivered his people as he had said he would, and God answers that he will because he is the sovereign covenant God who keeps his word. Therefore, Moses must keep his commission to speak God’s word. See further, E. A. Martens, “Tackling Old Testament Theology,” *JETS* 20 (1977): 123-32. The message is very similar to that found in the NT, “Where is the promise of his coming?” (2 Pet 3:4). The complaint of Moses (5:22-23) can be worded with Peter’s “Where is the promise of his coming?” theme; the assurance from Yahweh (6:1-9) can be worded with Peter’s “The Lord is not slack in keeping his promises” (2 Pet 3:9); and the third part, the instructions for Moses (6:10-13) can be worded with Peter’s “Prepare for the day of God and speed its coming” (2 Pet 3:12). The people who speak for God must do so in the sure confidence of the coming deliverance – Moses with the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, and Christians with the deliverance from this sinful world.

⁴ **tn** Heb “and Moses returned.”

⁵ **tn** The designation in Moses’ address is “Lord” (אֲדֹנָי, *’adonay*) – the term for “lord” or “master” but pointed as it would be when it represents the tetragrammaton.

⁶ **tn** The verb is הִרְעִיתָהּ (*hare’otah*), the Hiphil perfect of רָעָה (*ra’a*). The word itself means “to do evil,” and in this stem “to cause evil” – but evil in the sense of pain, calamity, trouble, or affliction, and not always in the sense of sin. Certainly not here. That God had allowed Pharaoh to oppose them had brought greater pain to the Israelites.

sn Moses’ question is rhetorical; the point is more of a complaint or accusation to God, although there is in it the desire to know why. B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 139) comments that such frank words were a sign of the man’s closeness to God. God never has objected to such bold complaints by the devout. He then notes how God was angered by his defenders in the book of Job rather than by Job’s heated accusations.

⁷ **tn** The demonstrative pronoun serves for emphasis in the question (see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 24, §118). This second question continues Moses’ bold approach to God, more chiding than praying. He is implying that if this was the result of the call, then God had no purpose calling him (compare Jeremiah’s similar complaint in Jer 20).

⁸ **sn** Now the verb הִרְעִיתָהּ (*hera’*) has a different subject – Pharaoh. The ultimate cause of the trouble was God, but the immediate cause was Pharaoh and the way he increased the work. Meanwhile, the Israelite foremen have pinned most of the blame on Moses and Aaron. Moses knows all about the sovereignty of God, and as he speaks in God’s name, he sees the effect it has on pagans like Pharaoh. So the rhetorical questions are designed to prod God to act differently.

⁹ **tn** The Hebrew construction is emphatic: לֹא־הִצַּלְתָּם (v^h*hatselt lo’-hüsalta*). The verb נָצַל (*natsal*) means “to deliver, rescue” in the sense of plucking out, even plundering. The infinitive absolute strengthens both the idea of the verb and the negative. God had not delivered this people at all.

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “your people.” The pronoun (“them”) has been used in the translation for stylistic reasons here, to avoid redundancy.

¹¹ **sn** The expression “I will do to Pharaoh” always refers to the plagues. God would first show his sovereignty over Pharaoh before defeating him.

¹² **tn** The expression “with a strong hand” (בְּיָד חֲזָקָה, *uv^hyad khazaqah*) could refer (1) to God’s powerful intervention (“compelled by my strong hand”) or (2) to Pharaoh’s forceful pursuit (“he will forcefully drive them out”). In Exod 3:20 God has summarized what his hand would do in Egypt, and that is probably what is intended here, as he promises that Moses will see what God will do. All Egypt ultimately desired that Israel be released (12:33), and when they were released Pharaoh pursued them to the sea, and so in a sense drove them out – whether that was his intention or not. But ultimately it was God’s power that was the real force behind it all. U. Casuto (*Exodus*, 74) considers that it is unlikely that the phrase would be used in the same verse twice with the same meaning. So he thinks that the first “strong hand” is God’s, and the second “strong hand” is Pharaoh’s. It is true that if Pharaoh acted forcefully in any way that contributed to Israel leaving Egypt it was because God was acting forcefully in his life. So in an understated way, God is saying that when forced by God’s strong hand, Pharaoh will indeed release God’s people.

¹³ **tn** Or “and he will forcefully drive them out of his land,” if the second occurrence of “strong hand” refers to Pharaoh’s rather than God’s (see the previous note).

sn In Exod 12:33 the Egyptians were eager to send (release) Israel away in haste, because they all thought they were going to die.

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “And God spoke.”

¹⁵ **sn** The announcement “I am the LORD” (Heb “Yahweh”) draws in the preceding revelation in Exod 3:15. In that place God called Moses to this task and explained the significance of the name “Yahweh” by the enigmatic expression “I AM that I AM.” “I AM” (אֲנִי־אֵלֹהִים, *ehyeh*) is not a name; “Yahweh” is. But the explanation of the name with this sentence indicates that Yahweh is the one who is always there, and that guarantees the future, for everything he does is consistent with his nature. He is eternal, never changing; he remains. Now, in Exodus 6, the meaning of the name “Yahweh” will be more fully unfolded.

Isaac, and to Jacob as¹ God Almighty,² but by³ my name ‘the LORD’⁴ I was not known to them.⁵

6:4 I also established my covenant with them⁶ to give them the land of Canaan, where they were living as resident foreigners.⁷ 6:5 I⁸ have also heard⁹ the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving,¹⁰ and I have remem-

¹ **tn** The preposition *bet* (ב) in this construction should be classified as a *bet essentialiae*, a *bet* of essence (see also GKC 379 §119.1).

² **tn** The traditional rendering of the title as “Almighty” is reflected in LXX and Jerome. But there is still little agreement on the etymology and exact meaning of אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיִם (*el-shadday*). Suggestions have included the idea of “mountain God,” meaning the high God, as well as “the God with breasts.” But there is very little evidence supporting such conclusions and not much reason to question the ancient versions.

³ **tn** The noun שְׁמִי (*shēmi*, “my name,” and “Yahweh” in apposition to it), is an adverbial accusative, specifying how the patriarchs “knew” him.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “Yahweh,” traditionally rendered in English as “the LORD.” The phrase has been placed in quotation marks in the translation to indicate it represents the tetragrammaton.

⁵ **tn** The verb is the Niphal form נִרְמַתִּי (*noda’ti*). If the text had wanted to say, “I did not make myself known,” then a Hiphil form would have been more likely. It is saying, “but by my name Yahweh I was not known to them.”

sn There are a number of important issues that need clarification in the interpretation of this section. First, it is important to note that “I am Yahweh” is not a new revelation of a previously unknown name. It would be introduced differently if it were. This is the identification of the covenant God as the one calling Moses – that would be proof for the people that their God had called him. Second, the title “El Shadday” is not a name, but a title. It is true that in the patriarchal accounts “El Shadday” is used six times; in Job it is used thirty times. Many conclude that it does reflect the idea of might or power. In some of those passages that reveal God as “El Shadday,” the name “Yahweh” was also used. But Wellhausen and other proponents of the earlier source critical analysis used Exod 6:3 to say that P, the so-called priestly source, was aware that the name “Yahweh” was not known by them, even though J, the supposed Yahwistic source, wrote using the name as part of his theology. Third, the texts of Genesis show that Yahweh had appeared to the patriarchs (Gen 12:1, 17:1, 18:1, 26:2, 26:24, 26:12, 35:1, 48:3), and that he spoke to each one of them (Gen 12:7, 15:1, 26:2, 28:13, 31:3). The name “Yahweh” occurs 162 times in Genesis, 34 of those times on the lips of speakers in Genesis (W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:340-41). They also made proclamation of Yahweh by name (4:26, 12:8), and they named places with the name (22:14). These passages should not be ignored or passed off as later interpretation. Fourth, “Yahweh” is revealed as the God of power, the sovereign God, who was true to his word and could be believed. He would do as he said (Num 23:19; 14:35; Exod 12:25; 22:24; 24:14; 36:36; 37:14). Fifth, there is a difference between promise and fulfillment in the way revelation is apprehended. The patriarchs were individuals who received the promises but without the fulfillment. The fulfillment could only come after the Israelites became a nation. Now, in Egypt, they are ready to become that promised nation. The two periods were not distinguished by not having and by having the name, but by two ways God revealed the significance of his name. “I am Yahweh” to the patriarchs indicated that he was the absolute, almighty, eternal God. The patriarchs were individuals sojourning in the land. God appeared to them in the significance of El Shadday. That was not his name. So Gen 17:1 says that “Yahweh appeared...and said, ‘I am El Shadday.’” See also Gen 35:11, 48:2, 28:3. Sixth, the verb “to know” is never used to introduce a name which had never been known or experienced. The Niphal and Hiphil of the verb are used only to describe the recognition of the overtones or significance of the name (see Jer 16:21, Isa 52:6; Ps 83:17ff; 1 Kgs 8:41ff. [people will know his name when prayers are answered]). For someone to say that he knew Yahweh meant that Yahweh had been experienced or recognized (see Exod 33:6; 1 Kgs 18:36; Jer 28:9; and Ps 76:2). Seventh,

“Yahweh” is not one of God’s names – it is his only name. Other titles, like “El Shadday,” are not strictly names but means of revealing Yahweh. All the revelations to the patriarchs could not compare to this one, because God was now dealing with the nation. He would make his name known to them through his deeds (see Ezek 20:5). So now they will “know” the “name.” The verb יָדַע (*yada’*) means more than “aware of, be knowledgeable about”; it means “to experience” the reality of the revelation by that name. This harmonizes with the usage of שֵׁם (*shem*), “name,” which encompasses all the attributes and actions of God. It is not simply a reference to a title, but to the way that God revealed himself – God gave meaning to his name through his acts. God is not saying that he had not revealed a name to the patriarchs (that would have used the Hiphil of the verb). Rather, he is saying that the patriarchs did not experience what the name Yahweh actually meant, and they could not without seeing it fulfilled. When Moses came to the elders, he identified his call as from Yahweh, the God of the fathers – and they accepted him. They knew the name. But, when they were delivered from bondage, then they fully knew by experience what that name meant, for his promises were fulfilled. U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 79) paraphrases it this way: “I revealed Myself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in My aspect that finds expression in the name Shaddai...I was not known to them, that is, it was not given to them to recognize Me as One that fulfils his promises.” This generation was about to “know” the name that their ancestors knew and used, but never experienced with the fulfillment of the promises. This section of Exodus confirms this interpretation, because in it God promised to bring them out of Egypt and give them the promised land – then they would know that he is Yahweh (6:7). This meaning should have been evident from its repetition to the Egyptians throughout the plagues – that they might know Yahweh (e.g., 7:5). See further R. D. Wilson, “Yahweh [Jehovah] and Exodus 6:3,” *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation*, 29-40; L. A. Herrboth, “Exodus 6:3b: Was God Known to the Patriarchs as Jehovah?” *CTM* 4 (1931): 345-49; F. C. Smith, “Observation on the Use of the Names and Titles of God in Genesis,” *EvQ* 40 (1968): 103-9.

⁶ **tn** The statement refers to the making of the covenant with Abraham (Gen 15 and following) and confirming it with the other patriarchs. The verb הִקְמִיתִי (*haqimoti*) means “set up, establish, give effect to, conclude” a covenant agreement. The covenant promised the patriarchs a great nation, a land – Canaan, and divine blessing. They lived with those promises, but now their descendants were in bondage in Egypt. God’s reference to the covenant here is meant to show the new revelation through redemption will start to fulfill the promises and show what the reality of the name Yahweh is to them.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “the land of their sojournings.” The noun מְגֻרִים (*mēgurim*) is a reminder that the patriarchs did not receive the promises. It is also an indication that those living in the age of promise did not experience the full meaning of the name of the covenant God. The “land of their sojournings” is the land of Canaan where the family lived (גָּר, *garu*) as foreigners, without owning property or having the rights of kinship with the surrounding population.

⁸ **tn** The addition of the independent pronoun אֲנִי (*‘ani*, “I”) emphasizes the fact that it was Yahweh himself who heard the cry.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “And also I have heard.”

¹⁰ **tn** The form is the Hiphil participle מְעַבְדִים (*ma’avidim*, “causing to serve”). The participle occurs in a relative clause that modifies “the Israelites.” The clause ends with the accusative “them,” which must be combined with the relative pronoun for a smooth English translation. So “who the Egyptians are enslaving them,” results in the translation “whom the Egyptians are enslaving.”

bered my covenant.¹ **6:6** Therefore, tell the Israelites, ‘I am the LORD. I will bring you out² from your enslavement to³ the Egyptians, I will rescue you from the hard labor they impose,⁴ and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. **6:7** I will take you to myself for a people, and I will be your God.⁵ Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from your enslavement to⁶ the Egyptians. **6:8** I will bring you to the land I swore to give⁷ to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob – and I will give it to you⁸ as a possession. I am the LORD!’”

6:9 Moses told this¹⁰ to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him¹¹ because of their discouragement¹² and hard labor. **6:10** Then the LORD said to Moses, **6:11** “Go, tell Pharaoh king

of Egypt that he must release¹³ the Israelites from his land.” **6:12** But Moses replied to¹⁴ the LORD, “If the Israelites did not listen to me, then¹⁵ how will Pharaoh listen to me, since¹⁶ I speak with difficulty?”¹⁷

6:13 The LORD spoke¹⁸ to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge¹⁹ for the Israelites and Pharaoh king of Egypt to bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt.

The Ancestry of the Deliverer

6:14²⁰ These are the heads of their fathers’ households:²¹

The sons²² of Reuben, the firstborn son of Israel, were Hanoch and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi. These were the clans²³ of Reuben.

6:15 The sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman. These were the clans of Simeon.

¹ **tn** As in Exod 2:24, this remembering has the significance of God’s beginning to act to fulfill the covenant promises.

² **sn** The verb *וְיִצְאֶנְךָ* (*vayyotse’u*) is a perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) consecutive, and so it receives a future translation – part of God’s promises. The word will be used later to begin the Decalogue and other covenant passages – “I am Yahweh who brought you out...”

³ **tn** *Heb* “from under the burdens of” (so KJV, NASB); NIV “from under the yoke of.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “from labor of them.” The antecedent of the pronoun is the Egyptians who have imposed slave labor on the Hebrews.

⁵ **sn** These covenant promises are being reiterated here because they are about to be fulfilled. They are addressed to the nation, not individuals, as the plural suffixes show. Yahweh was their God already, because they had been praying to him and he is acting on their behalf. When they enter into covenant with God at Sinai, then he will be the God of Israel in a new way (19:4-6; cf. Gen 17:7-8; 28:20-22; Lev 26:11-12; Jer 24:7; Ezek 11:17-20).

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “from under the burdens of” (so KJV, NASB); NIV “from under the yoke of.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “which I raised my hand to give it.” The relative clause specifies which land is their goal. The bold anthropomorphism mentions part of an oath-taking ceremony to refer to the whole event and reminds the reader that God swore that he would give the land to them. The reference to taking an oath would have made the promise of God sure in the mind of the Israelite.

⁸ **sn** Here is the twofold aspect again clearly depicted: God swore the promise to the patriarchs, but he is about to give what he promised to this generation. This generation will know more about him as a result.

⁹ **sn** The final part of this section focuses on instructions for Moses. The commission from God is the same – he is to speak to Pharaoh and he is to lead Israel out. It should have been clear to him that God would do this, for he had just been reminded how God was going to lead out, deliver, redeem, take the people as his people, and give them land. It was God’s work of love from beginning to end. Moses simply had his task to perform.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and Moses spoke thus.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “to Moses.” The proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“him”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹² **tn** The Hebrew *בְּקִצְרֵי רוּחַ* (*miqqotser ruakh*) means “because of the shortness of spirit.” This means that they were discouraged, dispirited, and weary – although some have also suggested it might mean impatient. The Israelites were now just not in the frame of mind to listen to Moses.

¹³ **tn** The form *וְיִשְׁלַחֲךָ* (*vishallakh*) is the Piel imperfect or jussive with a sequential *vav*; following an imperative it gives the imperative’s purpose and intended result. They are to speak to Pharaoh, and (so that as a result) he will release Israel. After the command to speak, however, the second clause also indirectly states the content of the speech (cf. Exod 11:2; 14:2, 15; 25:2; Lev 16:2; 22:2). As the next verse shows, Moses doubts that what he says will have the intended effect.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “And Moses spoke before.”

¹⁵ **sn** This analogy is an example of a *qal wahomer* comparison. It is an argument by inference from the light (*qal*) to the heavy (*homer*), from the simple to the more difficult. If the Israelites, who are Yahwists, would not listen to him, it is highly unlikely Pharaoh would.

¹⁶ **tn** The final clause begins with a disjunctive *vav* (ו), a *vav* on a nonverb form – here a pronoun. It introduces a circumstantial causal clause.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and [since] I am of uncircumcised lips.” The “lips” represent his speech (metonymy of cause). The term “uncircumcised” makes a comparison between his speech and that which Israel perceived as unacceptable, unprepared, foreign, and of no use to God. The heart is described this way when it is impervious to good impressions (Lev 26:41; Jer 9:26) and the ear when it hears imperfectly (Jer 6:10). Moses has here returned to his earlier claim – he does not speak well enough to be doing this.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “And Yahweh spoke.”

¹⁹ **tn** The term *וְצִוְתֶם* (*vayyotse’vtem*) is a Piel preterite with a pronominal suffix on it. The verb *צָוָה* (*tsavah*) means “to command” but can also have a much wider range of meanings. In this short summary statement, the idea of giving Moses and Aaron a commission to Israel and to Pharaoh indicates that come what may they have their duty to perform.

²⁰ **sn** This list of names shows that Moses and Aaron are in the line of Levi that came to the priesthood. It helps to identify them and authenticate them as spokesmen for God within the larger history of Israel. As N. M. Sarna observes, “Because a genealogy inherently symbolizes vigor and continuity, its presence here also injects a reassuring note into the otherwise despondent mood” (*Exodus* [JPSTC], 33).

²¹ **tn** The expression is literally “the house of their fathers.” This expression means that the household or family descended from a single ancestor. It usually indicates a subdivision of a tribe, that is, a clan, or the subdivision of a clan, that is, a family. Here it refers to a clan (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 46).

²² **tn** Or “descendants.”

²³ **tn** Or “families,” and so throughout the genealogy.

6:16 Now these are the names of the sons of Levi, according to their records:¹ Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. (The length of Levi's life was 137 years.)

6:17 The sons of Gershon, by their families, were Libni and Shimei.

6:18 The sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. (The length of Kohath's life was 133 years.)

6:19 The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi. These were the clans of Levi, according to their records.

6:20 Amram married² his father's sister Jochebed, and she bore him Aaron and Moses. (The length of Amram's life was 137 years.)

6:21 The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg, and Zikri.

6:22 The sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.

6:23 Aaron married Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

6:24 The sons of Korah were Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. These were the Korahite clans.

6:25 Now Eleazar son of Aaron married one of the daughters of Putiel and she bore him Phinehas.

These are the heads of the fathers' households³ of Levi according to their clans.

6:26 It was the same Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt by their regiments."⁴ 6:27 They were the men who were speaking to Pharaoh king of Egypt, in order to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. It was the same Moses and Aaron.

The Authentication of the Word

6:28⁵ When⁶ the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, 6:29 he said to him,⁷ "I am the LORD.

Tell⁸ Pharaoh king of Egypt all that⁹ I am telling¹⁰ you." 6:30 But Moses said before the LORD, "Since I speak with difficulty,¹¹ why should Pharaoh listen to me?"

7:1 So the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God¹² to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet.¹³ 7:2 You are to speak¹⁴ everything I command you,¹⁵ and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh that he must release¹⁶ the Israelites from his land. 7:3 But I will harden¹⁷ Pharaoh's heart, and although

been simplified in the translation as "he said to him" for stylistic reasons.

⁸ **tn** The verb is דַּבֵּר (*dabber*), the Piel imperative. It would normally be translated "speak," but in English that verb does not sound as natural with a direct object as "tell."

⁹ **tn** The clause begins with את כל־אֲשֶׁר (*et kol-asher*) indicating that this is a noun clause functioning as the direct object of the imperative and providing the content of the commanded speech.

¹⁰ **tn** דַּבֵּר (*dover*) is the Qal active participle; it functions here as the predicate in the noun clause: "that I [am] telling you." This one could be rendered, "that I am speaking to you."

¹¹ **tn** See note on Exod 6:12.

¹² **tn** The word "like" is added for clarity, making explicit the implied comparison in the statement "I have made you God to Pharaoh." The word אֱלֹהִים (*elohim*) is used a few times in the Bible for humans (e.g., Pss 45:6; 82:1), and always clearly in the sense of a subordinate to GOD - they are his representatives on earth. The explanation here goes back to 4:16. If Moses is like God in that Aaron is his prophet, then Moses is certainly like God to Pharaoh. Only Moses, then, is able to speak to Pharaoh with such authority, giving him commands.

¹³ **tn** The word נִבְיָאִים (*n'vi'ekha*, "your prophet") recalls 4:16. Moses was to be like God to Aaron, and Aaron was to speak for him. This indicates that the idea of a "prophet" was of one who spoke for God, an idea with which Moses and Aaron and the readers of Exodus are assumed to be familiar.

¹⁴ **tn** The imperfect tense here should have the nuance of instruction or injunction: "you are to speak." The subject is singular (Moses) and made emphatic by the presence of the personal pronoun "you."

¹⁵ **tn** The phrase translated "everything I command you" is a noun clause serving as the direct object of the verb "speak." The verb in the clause אֲצַוְךָ (*atsavvekha*) is the Piel imperfect. It could be classified as a future: "everything that I will command you." A nuance of progressive imperfect also fits well: "everything that I am commanding you."

¹⁶ **tn** The distinct emphasis is important. Aaron will speak to the people and Pharaoh what Moses tells him, and Moses will speak to Aaron what God commands him. The use of "command" keeps everything in perspective for Moses' position.

¹⁷ **tn** The form יַחֲזִיקוּ (*yashillakhu*), a Piel perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive. Following the imperfections of injunction or instruction, this verb continues the sequence. It could be taken as equal to an imperfect expressing future ("and he will release") or subordinate to express purpose ("to release" = "in order that he may release").

¹⁸ **tn** The clause begins with the emphatic use of the pronoun and a disjunctive *vav* (ו) expressing the contrast "But as for me, I will harden." They will speak, but God will harden.

¹⁹ **tn** The imperfect tense of the verb קָשָׁה (*qasha*) is found only here in these "hardening passages." The verb (here the Hiphil for "I will harden") summarizes Pharaoh's resistance to what God would be doing through Moses - he would stubbornly resist and refuse to submit; he would be resolved in his opposition. See R. R. Wilson, "The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart," *CBQ* 41 (1979): 18-36.

¹ **tn** Or "generations."
² **tn** *Heb* "took for a wife" (also in vv. 23, 25).
³ **tn** *Heb* "heads of the fathers" is taken as an abbreviation for the description of "households" in v. 14.
⁴ **tn** Or "by their hosts" or "by their armies." Often translated "hosts" (ASV, NASB) or "armies" (KJV), צְבָאוֹת (*ts'va'ot*) is a military term that portrays the people of God in battle array. In contemporary English, "regiment" is perhaps more easily understood as a force for battle than "company" (cf. NAB, NRSV) or "division" (NIV, NCV, NLT), both of which can have commercial associations. The term also implies an orderly departure.
⁵ **sn** From here on the confrontation between Yahweh and Pharaoh will intensify until Pharaoh is destroyed. The emphasis at this point, though, is on Yahweh's instructions for Moses to speak to Pharaoh. The first section (6:28-7:7) ends (v. 6) with the notice that Moses and Aaron did just as בְּאֲשֶׁר (*ba'asher*) Yahweh had commanded them; the second section (7:8-13) ends with the note that Pharaoh refused to listen, just as בְּאֲשֶׁר (*ba'asher*) Yahweh had said would be the case.
⁶ **tn** The beginning of this temporal clause does not follow the normal pattern of using the preterite of the main verb after the temporal indicator and prepositional phrase, but instead uses a perfect tense following the noun in construct: וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַהוּא (*vay'hi b'yom dibber*). See GKC 422 §130.d. This verse introduces a summary (vv. 28-30) of the conversation that was interrupted when the genealogy began.
⁷ **tn** *Heb* "and Yahweh spoke to Moses saying." This has

I will multiply⁴ my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt, 7:4 Pharaoh will not listen to you.² I will reach into³ Egypt and bring out my regiments,⁴ my people the Israelites, from the land of Egypt with great acts of judgment. 7:5 Then⁵ the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I extend my hand⁶ over Egypt and bring the Israelites out from among them.

7:6 And Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the LORD commanded them. 7:7 Now Moses was eighty years old and Aaron was eighty-three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh.

7:8 The LORD said⁷ to Moses and Aaron,⁸ 7:9 “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Do⁹ a miracle,’ and you say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw it down¹⁰ before Pharaoh,’ it will become¹¹ a snake.” 7:10 When¹² Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh, they did so, just as the LORD had commanded them – Aaron threw¹³ down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants and it became a snake.¹⁴ 7:11 Then Pharaoh also sum-

moned wise men and sorcerers,¹⁵ and the magicians¹⁶ of Egypt by their secret arts¹⁷ did the same thing. 7:12 Each man¹⁸ threw down his staff, and the staffs became snakes. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs. 7:13 Yet Pharaoh’s heart became hard,¹⁹ and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had predicted.

The First Blow: Water to Blood

7:14²⁰ The LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is hard;²¹ he refuses to release²² the people. 7:15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning when²³ he

1 tn The form beginning the second half of the verse is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive, *הִרְבִּיתִי* (*hirbeti*). It could be translated as a simple future in sequence after the imperfect preceding it, but the logical connection is not obvious. Since it carries the force of an imperfect due to the sequence, it may be subordinated as a temporal clause to the next clause that begins in v. 4. That maintains the flow of the argument.

2 tn *Heb* “and Pharaoh will not listen.”

3 tn *Heb* “put my hand into.” The expression is a strong anthropomorphism to depict God’s severest judgment on Egypt. The point is that neither the speeches of Moses and Aaron nor the signs that God would do will be effective. Consequently, God would deliver the blow that would destroy.

4 tn See the note on this term in 6:26.

5 tn The emphasis on sequence is clear because the form is the perfect tense with the *vav* consecutive.

sn The use of the verb “to know” (יָדַע, *yada*) underscores what was said with regard to 6:3. By the time the actual exodus took place, the Egyptians would have “known” the name Yahweh, probably hearing it more than they wished. But they will know – experience the truth of it – when Yahweh defeats them.

6 sn This is another anthropomorphism, parallel to the preceding. If God were to “put” (פָּתַח, *patan*), “extend” (נָטָה, *nata*), or “reach out” (שָׁלַח, *shalakh*) his hand against them, they would be destroyed. Contrast Exod 24:11.

7 tn *Heb* “And Yahweh said.”

8 tn *Heb* “said to Moses and Aaron, saying.”

9 tn The verb is הָנִיחַ (*hniḥ*), literally “give.” The imperative is followed by an ethical dative that strengthens the subject of the imperative: “you give a miracle.”

10 tn *Heb* “and throw it.” The direct object, “it,” is implied.

11 tn The form is the jussive יָהִי (*yehi*). Gesenius notes that frequently in a conditional clause, a sentence with a protasis and apodosis, the jussive will be used. Here it is in the apodosis (GKC 323 §109.h).

12 tn The clause begins with the preterite and the *vav* (ו) consecutive; it is here subordinated to the next clause as a temporal clause.

13 tn *Heb* “and Aaron threw.”

14 tn The noun used here is תַּנִּינִי (*tannin*), and not the word for “serpent” or “snake” used in chap. 4. This noun refers to a large reptile, in some texts large river or sea creatures (Gen 1:21; Ps 74:13) or land creatures (Deut 32:33). This wonder paralleled Moses’ miracle in 4:3 when he cast his staff down. But this is Aaron’s staff, and a different miracle. The noun could still be rendered “snake” here since the term could be broad enough to include it.

15 sn For information on this Egyptian material, see D. B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph* (VTSup), 203-4.

16 tn The *khartummim* (כַּרְתֻּמִּים) seem to have been the keepers of Egypt’s religious and magical texts, the sacred scribes.

17 tn The term בְּלִמְיָהֶם (*blimyahem*) means “by their secret arts”; it is from לִוּם (*lut*, “to enwrap”). The Greek renders the word “by their magic”; *Tg. Onq.* uses “murmurings” and “whispers,” and other Jewish sources “dazzling display” or “demons” (see further B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 253-54). They may have done this by clever tricks, manipulation of the animals, or demonic power. Many have suggested that Aaron and the magicians were familiar with an old trick in which they could temporarily paralyze a serpent and then revive it. But here Aaron’s snake swallows up their snakes.

18 tn The verb is plural, but the subject is singular, “a man – his staff.” This noun can be given a distributive sense: “each man threw down his staff.”

19 tn This phrase translates the Hebrew word כְּחָזַק (*khazaq*); see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 53.

sn For more on this subject, see B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 241-49. S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 53) notes that when this word (כְּחָזַק) is used it indicates a will or attitude that is unyielding and firm, but when כָּבֵד (*kaved*) is used, it stresses the will as being slow to move, unimpressional, slow to be affected.

20 sn With the first plague, or blow on Pharaoh, a new section of the book unfolds. Until now the dominant focus has been on preparing the deliverer for the exodus. From here the account will focus on preparing Pharaoh for it. The theological emphasis for exposition of the entire series of plagues may be: The sovereign Lord is fully able to deliver his people from the oppression of the world so that they may worship and serve him alone. The distinct idea of each plague then will contribute to this main idea. It is clear from the outset that God could have delivered his people simply and suddenly. But he chose to draw out the process with the series of plagues. There appear to be several reasons: First, the plagues are designed to judge Egypt. It is justice for slavery. Second, the plagues are designed to inform Israel and Egypt of the ability of Yahweh. Everyone must know that it is Yahweh doing all these things. The Egyptians must know this before they are destroyed. Third, the plagues are designed to deliver Israel. The first plague is the plague of blood: God has absolute power over the sources of life. Here Yahweh strikes the heart of Egyptian life with death and corruption. The lesson is that God can turn the source of life into the prospect of death. Moreover, the Nile was venerated; so by turning it into death Moses was showing the superiority of Yahweh.

21 tn Or “unresponsive” (so HALOT 456 s.v. כָּבֵד).

22 tn The Piel infinitive construct לְשַׁלַּח (*l’shallakh*) serves as the direct object of פָּתַח (*me’en*), telling what Pharaoh refuses (characteristic perfect) to do. The whole clause is an explanation (like a metonymy of effect) of the first clause that states that Pharaoh’s heart is hard.

23 tn The clause begins with הִנֵּה (*hinneh*); here it provides the circumstances for the instruction for Moses – he is going out to the water so go meet him. A temporal clause translation captures the connection between the clauses.

goes out to the water. Position yourself¹ to meet him by the edge of the Nile,² and take³ in your hand the staff⁴ that was turned into a snake. 7:16 Tell him, “The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to you to say,⁵ “Release my people, that they may serve me⁶ in the desert!” But until now⁷ you have not listened.⁸ 7:17 Thus says the LORD: “By this you will know that I am the LORD: I am going to strike⁹ the water of the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned into blood.¹⁰

7:18 Fish¹¹ in the Nile will die, the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will be unable¹² to drink water from the Nile.””” 7:19 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over Egypt’s waters – over their rivers, over their canals,¹³ over their ponds, and over all their reservoirs¹⁴ – so that it becomes¹⁵ blood.’ There will be blood everywhere in¹⁶ the land of Egypt, even in wooden and stone containers.” 7:20 Moses and Aaron did so,¹⁷ just as the LORD had commanded. Moses raised¹⁸ the staff¹⁹ and struck the water that was in the Nile right before the eyes²⁰ of Pharaoh and his servants,²¹ and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to

¹ tn The instruction to Moses continues with this perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive following the imperative. The verb means “to take a stand, station oneself.” It seems that Pharaoh’s going out to the water was a regular feature of his day and that Moses could be there waiting to meet him.

² sn The Nile, the source of fertility for the country, was deified by the Egyptians. There were religious festivals held to the god of the Nile, especially when the Nile was flooding. The Talmud suggests that Pharaoh in this passage went out to the Nile to make observations as a magician about its level. Others suggest he went out simply to bathe or to check the water level – but that would not change the view of the Nile that was prevalent in the land.

³ tn The verb תִּקַּח (tiqqakh), the Qal imperfect of לָקַח (laqakh), functions here as the imperfect of instruction, or injunction perhaps, given the word order of the clause.

⁴ tn The final clause begins with the noun and *vav* disjunctive, which singles this instruction out for special attention – “now the staff...you are to take.”

⁵ tn The form לֵאמֹר (le’mor) is the Qal infinitive construct with the *lamed* (ל) preposition. It is used so often exegetically that it has achieved idiomatic status – “saying” (if translated at all). But here it would make better sense to take it as a purpose infinitive. God sent him to say these words.

⁶ tn The imperfect tense with the *vav* (וְעַבְדֵּי, *va’vdu*) following the imperative is in volitive sequence, showing the purpose – “that they may serve me.” The word “serve” (עָבַד, *’avad*) is a general term to include religious observance and obedience.

⁷ tn The final עַד־כֹּה (‘ad-koh, “until now”) narrows the use of the perfect tense to the present perfect: “you have not listened.” That verb, however, involves more than mere audition. It has the idea of responding to, hearkening, and in some places obeying; here “you have not complied” might catch the point of what Moses is saying, while “listen” helps to maintain the connection with other uses of the verb.

⁸ tn Or “complied” (שָׁמַעְתָּ, *shama’ta*).

⁹ tn The construction using הִנֵּה (hinneh) before the participle (here the Hiphil participle מַכֶּה, *makkeh*) introduces a *futur instans* use of the participle, expressing imminent future, that he is about to do something.

¹⁰ sn W. C. Kaiser summarizes a view that has been adopted by many scholars, including a good number of conservatives, that the plagues overlap with natural phenomena in Egypt. Accordingly, the “blood” would not be literal blood, but a reddish contamination in the water. If there was an unusually high inundation of the Nile, the water flowed sluggishly through swamps and was joined with the water from the mountains that washed out the reddish soil. If the flood were high, the water would have a deeper red color. In addition to this discoloration, there is said to be a type of algae which produce a stench and a deadly fluctuation of the oxygen level of the river that is fatal to fish (see W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:350; he cites Greta Hort, “The Plagues of Egypt,” *ZAW* 69 [1957]: 84-103; same title, *ZAW* 70 [1958]: 48-59). While

most scholars would agree that the water did not actually become blood (any more than the moon will be turned to literal blood [Joel 2:31]), many are not satisfied with this kind of explanation. If the event was a fairly common feature of the Nile, it would not have been any kind of sign to Pharaoh – and it should still be observable. The features that would have to be safeguarded are that it was understood to be done by the staff of God, that it was unexpected and not a mere coincidence, and that the magnitude of the contamination, color, stench, and death, was unparalleled. God does use natural features in miracles, but to be miraculous signs they cannot simply coincide with natural phenomena.

¹¹ tn The definite article here has the generic use, indicating the class – “fish” (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 19, §92).

¹² tn The verb לָאָה (la’a), here in the Niphal perfect with a *vav* consecutive, means “be weary, impatient.” The Niphal meaning is “make oneself weary” in doing something, or “weary (strenuously exert) oneself.” It seems always to indicate exhausted patience (see BDB 521 s.v.). The term seems to imply that the Egyptians were not able to drink the red, contaminated water, and so would expend all their energy looking for water to drink – in frustration of course.

¹³ tn Or “irrigation rivers” of the Nile.

¹⁴ sn The Hebrew term means “gathering,” i.e., wherever they gathered or collected waters, notably cisterns and reservoirs. This would naturally lead to the inclusion of both wooden and stone vessels – down to the smallest gatherings.

¹⁵ tn The imperfect tense with *vav* (ו) after the imperative indicates the purpose or result: “in order that they [the waters] be[come] blood.”

¹⁶ tn Or “in all.”

¹⁷ sn Both Moses and Aaron had tasks to perform. Moses, being the “god” to Pharaoh, dealt directly with him and the Nile. He would strike the Nile. But Aaron, “his prophet,” would stretch out the staff over the rest of the waters of Egypt.

¹⁸ tn Heb “And he raised”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁹ tn Gesenius calls the preposition on “staff” the *bet instrumenti*, used to introduce the object (GKC 380-81 §119. q). This construction provides a greater emphasis than an accusative.

²⁰ tn The text could be rendered “in the sight of,” or simply “before,” but the literal idea of “before the eyes of” may stress how obvious the event was and how personally they were witnesses of it.

²¹ sn U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 98) notes that the striking of the water was not a magical act. It signified two things: (1) the beginning of the sign, which was in accordance with God’s will, as Moses had previously announced, and (2) to symbolize actual “striking” wherewith the Lord strikes Egypt and its gods (see v. 25).

blood.¹ 7:21 When the fish² that were in the Nile died, the Nile began³ to stink, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood⁴ everywhere in the land of Egypt! 7:22 But the magicians of Egypt did the same⁵ by their secret arts, and so⁶ Pharaoh's heart remained hard,⁷ and he refused to listen to Moses and Aaron⁸ – just as the LORD had predicted. 7:23 And Pharaoh turned and went into his house. He did not pay any attention to this.⁹ 7:24 All the Egyptians dug around the Nile for water to drink,¹⁰ because they could not drink the water of the Nile.

The Second Blow: Frogs

7:25¹¹ Seven full days passed¹² after the LORD struck¹³ the Nile. 8:1 (7:26)¹⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and tell him, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Release my people in order that they may serve me! 8:2 But if you refuse to release them, then I am going to plague¹⁵ all your territory with frogs.¹⁶ 8:3 The Nile will swarm¹⁷ with frogs, and they will come

¹¹ **sn** An attempt to connect this plague with the natural phenomena of Egypt proposes that because of the polluted water due to the high Nile, the frogs abandoned their normal watery homes (seven days after the first plague) and sought cover from the sun in homes wherever there was moisture. Since they had already been exposed to the poisonous water, they died very suddenly. The miracle was in the announcement and the timing, i.e., that Moses would predict this blow, and in the magnitude of it all, which was not natural (Greta Hort, “The Plagues of Egypt,” ZAW 69 [1957]: 95-98). It is also important to note that in parts of Egypt there was a fear of these creatures as embodying spirits capable of great evil. People developed the mentality of bowing to incredibly horrible idols to drive away the bad spirits. Evil spirits are represented in the book of Revelation in the forms of frogs (Rev 16:13). The frogs that the magicians produced could very well have been in the realm of evil spirits. Exactly how the Egyptians thought about this plague is hard to determine, but there is enough evidence to say that the plague would have made them spiritually as well as physically uncomfortable, and that the death of the frogs would have been a “sign” from God about their superstitions and related beliefs. The frog is associated with the god Hapi, and a frog-headed goddess named Heqet was supposed to assist women at childbirth. The plague would have been evidence that Yahweh was controlling their environment and upsetting their beliefs for his own purpose.

¹² **tn** The text literally has “and seven days were filled.” Seven days gave Pharaoh enough time to repent and release Israel. When the week passed, God's second blow came.

¹³ **tn** This is a temporal clause made up of the preposition, the Hiphil infinitive construct of נָכַח (*nakkah*), the Hakkot, followed by the subjective genitive YHWH. Here the verb is applied to the true meaning of the plague: Moses struck the water, but the plague was a blow struck by God.

¹⁴ **sn** Beginning with 8:1, the verse numbers through 8:32 in English Bibles differ from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (*BHS*), with 8:1 ET = 7:26 HT, 8:2 ET = 7:27 HT, 8:3 ET = 7:28 HT, 8:4 ET = 7:29 HT, 8:5 ET = 8:1 HT, etc., through 8:32 ET = 8:28 HT. Thus in English Bibles chapter 8 has 32 verses, while in the Hebrew Bible it has 28 verses, with the four extra verses attached to chapter 7.

¹⁵ **tn** The construction here uses the deictic particle and the participle to convey the imminent future: “I am going to plague/about to plague.” The verb נָגַף (*nagaf*) means “to strike, to smite,” and its related noun means “a blow, a plague, pestilence” or the like. For Yahweh to say “I am about to plague you” could just as easily mean “I am about to strike you.” That is why these “plagues” can be described as “blows” received from God.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “plague all your border with frogs.” The expression “all your border” is figurative for all the territory of Egypt and the people and things that are within the borders (also used in Exod 10:4, 14, 19; 13:7).

sn This word for frogs is mentioned in the OT only in conjunction with this plague (here and Pss 78:45, 105:30). R. A. Cole (*Exodus* [TOTC], 91) suggests that this word “frogs” (צַבְרָדִיעִים, *ts'fardim*) may be an onomatopoeic word, something like “croakers”; it is of Egyptian origin and could be a Hebrew attempt to write the Arabic *dofla*.

¹⁷ **sn** The choice of this verb שָׂרַץ (*sharats*) recalls its use in the creation account (Gen 1:20). The water would be swarming with frogs in abundance. There is a hint here of this being a creative work of God as well.

¹ **sn** There have been various attempts to explain the details of this plague or blow. One possible suggestion is that the plague turned the Nile into “blood,” but that it gradually turned back to its normal color and substance. However, the effects of the “blood” polluted the water so that dead fish and other contamination left it undrinkable. This would explain how the magicians could also do it – they would not have tried if all water was already turned to blood. It also explains why Pharaoh did not ask for the water to be turned back. This view was put forward by B. Schor; it is summarized by B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 258), who prefers the view of Rashi that the blow affected only water in use.

² **tn** The first clause in this verse begins with a *vav* disjunctive, introducing a circumstantial clause to the statement that the water stank. The *vav* (ו) consecutive on the next verb shows that the smell was the result of the dead fish in the contaminated water. The result is then expressed with the *vav* beginning the clause that states that they could not drink it.

³ **tn** The preterite could be given a simple definite past translation, but an ingressive past would be more likely, as the smell would get worse and worse with the dead fish.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and there was blood.”

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “thus, so.”

⁶ **tn** The *vav* consecutive on the preterite introduces the outcome or result of the matter – Pharaoh was hardened.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and the heart of Pharaoh became hard.” This phrase translates the Hebrew word חָזַק (*khazaq*; see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 53). In context this represents the continuation of a prior condition.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “to them”; the referents (Moses and Aaron) have been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁹ **tn** The text has וְלֹא־שָׂת לְבוֹ גַם־לְזָוָתָהּ (*v'lo'-shat libbo gamlazo't*), which literally says, “and he did not set his heart also to this.” To “set the heart” to something would mean “to consider it.” This Hebrew idiom means that he did not pay attention to it, or take it to heart (cf. 2 Sam 13:20; Ps 48:13; 62:10; Prov 22:17; 24:32). Since Pharaoh had not been affected by this, he did not consider it or its implications further.

¹⁰ **tn** The text stresses that the water in the Nile, and Nile water that had been diverted or collected for use, was polluted and undrinkable. Water underground also was from the Nile, but it had not been contaminated, certainly not with dead fish, and so would be drinkable.

up and go into your house, in your bedroom, and on your bed, and into the houses of your servants and your people, and into your ovens and your kneading troughs.¹ **8:4** Frogs² will come up against you, your people, and all your servants.”³

8:5 The LORD spoke to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Extend your hand with your staff⁴ over the rivers, over the canals, and over the ponds, and bring the frogs up over the land of Egypt.’” **8:6** So Aaron extended his hand over the waters of Egypt, and frogs⁵ came up and covered the land of Egypt.

8:7 The magicians did the same⁶ with their secret arts and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt too.⁷

8:8 Then Pharaoh summoned⁸ Moses and Aaron and said, “Pray⁹ to the LORD that he may take the frogs away¹⁰ from me and my people, and I will release¹¹ the people that they may sacrifice¹² to the LORD.” **8:9** Moses said to Pharaoh,

“You may have the honor over me¹³ – when shall I pray for you, your servants, and your people, for the frogs to be removed¹⁴ from you and your houses, so that¹⁵ they will be left¹⁶ only in the Nile?” **8:10** He said, “Tomorrow.” And Moses said,¹⁷ “It will be¹⁸ as you say,¹⁹ so that you may know that there is no one like the LORD our God. **8:11** The frogs will depart from you, your houses, your servants, and your people; they will be left only in the Nile.”

8:12 Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried²⁰ to the LORD because of²¹ the frogs that he had brought on²² Pharaoh.

8:13 The LORD did as Moses asked²³ – the²⁴ frogs died out of the houses, the villages, and the fields. **8:14** The Egyptians²⁵ piled them in countless heaps,²⁶ and the land stank. **8:15** But when

¹ sn This verse lists places the frogs will go. The first three are for Pharaoh personally – they are going to touch his private life. Then the text mentions the servants and the people. Mention of the ovens and kneading bowls (or troughs) of the people indicates that food would be contaminated and that it would be impossible even to eat a meal in peace.

² tn Here again is the generic use of the article, designating the class – frogs.

³ sn The word order of the Hebrew text is important because it shows how the plague was pointedly directed at Pharaoh: “and against you, and against your people, and against all your servants frogs will go up.”

⁴ sn After the instructions for Pharaoh (7:25-8:4), the plague now is brought on by the staff in Aaron’s hand (8:5-7). This will lead to the confrontation (vv. 8-11) and the hardening (vv. 12-15).

⁵ tn The noun is singular, a collective. B. Jacob notes that this would be the more natural way to refer to the frogs (*Exodus*, 260).

⁶ tn Heb “thus, so.”

⁷ sn In these first two plagues the fact that the Egyptians could and did duplicate them is ironic. By duplicating the experience, they added to the misery of Egypt. One wonders why they did not use their skills to rid the land of the pests instead, and the implication of course is that they could not.

⁸ tn The verb קָרָא (*qara*) followed by the *lamed* (ל) preposition has the meaning “to summon.”

⁹ tn The verb הִתְחַנְּנוּ (*ha’tinu*) is the Hiphil imperative of the verb חָנַן (*atar*). It means “to pray, supplicate,” or “make supplication” – always addressed to God. It is often translated “entreat” to reflect that it is a more urgent praying.

¹⁰ tn This form is the jussive with a sequential *vav* that provides the purpose of the prayer: pray...that he may turn away the frogs.

¹¹ sn This is the first time in the conflict that Pharaoh even acknowledged that Yahweh existed. Now he is asking for prayer to remove the frogs and is promising to release Israel. This result of the plague must have been an encouragement to Moses.

¹² tn The form is the Piel cohortative הִשְׁלַחְתִּי (va’ashall^hkhah) with the *vav* (ו) continuing the sequence from the request and its purpose. The cohortative here stresses the resolve of the king: “and (then) I will release.”

¹³ tn Here also the imperfect tense with the *vav* (ו) shows the purpose of the release: “that they may sacrifice.”

¹³ tn The expression הִתְפַּאֵר עָלַי (*hipa’er ‘alay*) is problematic. The verb would be simply translated “honor yourself” or “deck yourself with honor.” It can be used in the bad sense of self-exaltation. But here it seems to mean “have the honor or advantage over me” in choosing when to remove the frogs. The LXX has “appoint for me.” Moses is doing more than extending a courtesy to Pharaoh; he is giving him the upper hand in choosing the time. But it is also a test, for if Pharaoh picked the time it would appear less likely that Moses was manipulating things. As U. Cassuto puts it, Moses is saying “my trust in God is so strong you may have the honor of choosing the time” (*Exodus*, 103).

¹⁴ tn Or “destroyed”; Heb “to cut off the frogs.”

¹⁵ tn The phrase “so that” is implied.

¹⁶ tn Or “survive, remain.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “And he said”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁸ tn “It will be” has been supplied.

¹⁹ tn Heb “according to your word” (so NASB).

²⁰ tn The verb צָעַק (*tsa’aq*) is used for prayers in which people cry out of trouble or from danger. U. Cassuto observes that Moses would have been in real danger if God had not answered this prayer (*Exodus*, 103).

²¹ tn Heb “over the matter of.”

²² tn The verb is an unusual choice if it were just to mean “brought on.” It is the verb שָׂם (*sim*, “place, put”). S. R. Driver thinks the thought is “appointed for Pharaoh” as a sign (*Exodus*, 64). The idea of the sign might be too much, but certainly the frogs were positioned for the instruction of the stubborn king.

²³ tn Heb “according to the word of Moses” (so KJV, NASB). Just as Moses had told Pharaoh “according to your word” (v. 10), now the LORD does “according to the word” of Moses.

²⁴ tn Heb “and the frogs died.”

²⁵ tn Heb “and they piled them.” For clarity the translation supplies the referent “the Egyptians” as the ones who were piling the frogs.

²⁶ tn The word “heaps” is repeated: הִקְרַם הַקְרָמִים (*khomarim khomarim*). The repetition serves to intensify the idea to the highest degree – “countless heaps” (see GKC 396 §123.e).

Pharaoh saw that there was relief,¹ he hardened² his heart and did not listen to them, just as the LORD had predicted.³

The Third Blow: Gnats

8:16⁴ The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Extend your staff and strike the dust of the ground, and it will become⁵ gnats⁶ throughout all the land of Egypt.’” **8:17** They did so; Aaron extended his hand with his staff, he struck the dust of the ground, and it became gnats on people⁷ and on animals. All the dust of the ground became gnats throughout all the land of Egypt. **8:18** When⁸ the magicians attempted⁹ to bring forth gnats by their secret arts, they could not. So there were gnats on people and on animals. **8:19** The magicians said¹⁰ to Pharaoh, “It is the finger¹¹ of God!” But Pharaoh’s heart remained

hard,¹² and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had predicted.

The Fourth Blow: Flies

8:20¹³ The LORD¹⁴ said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning and position yourself before Pharaoh as he goes out to the water, and tell him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Release my people that they may serve me! **8:21** If you do not release¹⁵ my people, then I am going to send¹⁶ swarms of flies¹⁷ on you and on your servants and on your people and in your houses. The houses of the Egyptians will be full of flies, and even the ground they stand on.¹⁸ **8:22** But on that day I will mark off¹⁹ the land of Goshen, where my people are staying,²⁰ so that no swarms of flies

1 tn The word *וַיִּרְחַם* (*vakhah*) means “respire, relief.” BDB 926 relates it to the verb *רָחַם* (*ravakh*, “to be wide, spacious”). There would be relief when there was freedom to move about.

2 tn *וַיִּכְבֵּד* (*hakhbed*) is a Hiphil infinitive absolute, functioning as a finite verb. The meaning of the word is “to make heavy,” and so stubborn, sluggish, indifferent. It summarizes his attitude and the outcome, that he refused to keep his promises.

3 sn The end of the plague revealed clearly God’s absolute control over Egypt’s life and deities – all at the power of the man who prayed to God. Yahweh had made life unpleasant for the people by sending the plague, but he was also the one who could remove it. The only recourse anyone has in such trouble is to pray to the sovereign Lord God. Everyone should know that there is no one like Yahweh.

4 sn The third plague is brief and unannounced. Moses and Aaron were simply to strike the dust so that it would become gnats. Not only was this plague unannounced, but also it was not duplicated by the Egyptians.

5 tn The verb is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive, meaning “and it will be.” When *הָיָה* (*hayah*) is followed by the *lamed* (ל) proposition, it means “become.”

6 tn The noun *כִּנִּימִים* (*kinnim*). The insect has been variously identified as lice, gnats, ticks, flies, fleas, or mosquitoes. “Lice” follows the reading in the Peshitta and Targum (and so Josephus, *Ant.* 2.14.3 [2.300]). Greek and Latin had “gnats.” By “gnats” many commentators mean “mosquitoes,” which in and around the water of Egypt were abundant (and the translators of the Greek text were familiar with Egypt). Whatever they were they came from the dust and were troublesome to people and animals.

7 tn *Heb* “man,” but in the generic sense of “humans” or “people” (also in v. 18).

8 tn The preterite with *vav* (ו) consecutive is here subordinated to the main clause as a temporal clause.

9 tn *Heb* “and the magicians did so.”

sn The report of what the magicians did (or as it turns out, tried to do) begins with the same words as the report about the actions of Moses and Aaron – “and they did so” (vv. 17 and 18). The magicians copy the actions of Moses and Aaron, leading readers to think momentarily that the magicians are again successful, but at the end of the verse comes the news that “they could not.” Compared with the first two plagues, this third plague has an important new feature, the failure of the magicians and their recognition of the source of the plague.

10 tn *Heb* “and the magicians said.”

11 tn The word “finger” is a bold anthropomorphism (a figure of speech in which God is described using human characteristics).

sn The point of the magicians’ words is clear enough. They knew they were beaten and by whom. The reason for their choice of the word “finger” has occasioned many theories,

none of which is entirely satisfying. At the least their statement highlights that the plague was accomplished by God with majestic ease and effortlessness. Perhaps the reason that they could not do this was that it involved producing life – from the dust of the ground, as in Genesis 2:7. The creative power of God confounded the magic of the Egyptians and brought on them a loathsome plague.

12 tn *Heb* “and the heart of Pharaoh became hard.” This phrase translates the Hebrew word *קָהָה* (*khaq; see S. R. Driver, Exodus, 53*). In context this represents the continuation of a prior condition.

13 sn The announcement of the fourth plague parallels that of the first plague. Now there will be flies, likely dogflies. Egypt has always suffered from flies, more so in the summer than in the winter. But the flies the plague describes involve something greater than any normal season for flies. The main point that can be stressed in this plague comes by tracing the development of the plagues in their sequence. Now, with the flies, it becomes clear that God can inflict suffering on some people and preserve others – a preview of the coming judgment that will punish Egypt but set Israel free. God is fully able to keep the dog-fly in the land of the Egyptians and save his people from these judgments.

14 tn *Heb* “And Yahweh said.”

15 tn The construction uses the predicator of nonexistence *אֵין* (*en*, “there is not”) – with a pronominal suffix prior to the Piel participle. The suffix becomes the subject of the clause. *Heb* “but if there is not you releasing.”

16 tn Here again is the *futur instans* use of the participle, now *Qal* with the meaning “send”: *הִנְנִי מְשַׁלְּחִי* (*hinni mashlakh*, “here I am sending”).

17 tn The word *עָרֹב* (*arob*) means “a mix” or “swarm.” It seems that some irritating kind of flying insect is involved. Ps 78:45 says that the Egyptians were eaten or devoured by them. Various suggestions have been made over the years: (1) it could refer to beasts or reptiles; (2) the Greek took it as the dog-fly, a vicious blood-sucking gadfly, more common in the spring than in the fall; (3) the ordinary house fly, which is a symbol of Egypt in Isa 7:18 (Hebrew *וַיִּשְׁלַח*, *uob*); and (4) the beetle, which gnaws and bites plants, animals, and materials. The fly probably fits the details of this passage best; the plague would have greatly intensified a problem with flies that already existed.

18 tn Or perhaps “the land where they are” (cf. NRSV “the land where they live”).

19 tn Or “distinguish.” *וַיַּבְדִּילֵהוּ* (*hiflet*) is the Hiphil perfect of *פָּלַח* (*palah*). The verb in Hiphil means “to set apart, make separate, make distinct.” God was going to keep the flies away from Goshen – he was setting that apart. The Greek text assumed that the word was from *פָּלַח* (*pale*), and translated it something like “I will marvelously glorify.”

20 tn The relative clause modifies the land of Goshen as the place “in which my people are dwelling.” But the normal word for “dwelling” is not used here. Instead, *עָוֹד* (*omed*) is used, which literally means “standing.” The land on which Israel stood was spared the flies and the hail.

will be there, that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of this land.¹ **8:23** I will put a division² between my people and your people. This sign will take place³ tomorrow.”” **8:24** The LORD did so; ⁴ thick⁵ swarm of flies came into⁶ Pharaoh’s house and into the houses⁷ of his servants, and throughout the whole land of Egypt the land was ruined⁸ because of the swarms of flies.

8:25 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God without in the land.”⁹ **8:26** But Moses said, “That would not be the right thing to do,¹⁰ for the sacrifices we make¹¹ to the LORD our God would be an abomination¹² to the Egyptians.¹³ If we make

sacrifices that are an abomination to the Egyptians right before their eyes,¹⁴ will they not stone us?”¹⁵ **8:27** We must go¹⁶ on a three-day journey¹⁷ into the desert and sacrifice¹⁸ to the LORD our God, just as he is telling us.”¹⁹

8:28 Pharaoh said, “I will release you²⁰ so that you may sacrifice²¹ to the LORD your God in the desert. Only you must not go very far.” **22** **Do**²² **pray**²³ for me.”

8:29 Moses said, “I am going to go out²⁴ from you and pray to the LORD, and the swarms of flies will go away from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people tomorrow. Only do not let Pharaoh deal falsely again²⁵ by not

¹ tn Or “of the earth” (KJV, ASV, NAB).

² tn The word in the text is פָּדַת (*p^odat*, “redemption”). This would give the sense of making a distinction by redeeming Israel. The editors wish to read פָּלַת (*p^olut*) instead – “a separation, distinction” to match the verb in the preceding verse. For another view, see G. I. Davies, “The Hebrew Text of Exodus VIII 19 [English 23]: An Emendation,” *VT* 24 (1974): 489-92.

³ tn Heb “this sign will be tomorrow.”

⁴ tn Heb “and there came a...”

⁵ tn Heb “heavy,” or “severe.”

⁶ tn Here, and in the next phrase, the word “house” has to be taken as an adverbial accusative of termination.

⁷ tn The Hebrew text has the singular here.

⁸ tc Concerning the connection of “the land was ruined” with the preceding, S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 68) suggests reading with the LXX, Smr, and Peshitta; this would call for adding a conjunction before the last clause to make it read, “into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants’ houses, and into all the land of Egypt; **and** the land was...”

⁹ tn The Hebrew word תִּשְׁחֶת (*tishakhet*) is a strong word; it is the Niphal imperfect of שָׁחַת (*shakhat*) and is translated “ruined.” If the classification as imperfect stands, then it would have to be something like a progressive imperfect (the land was being ruined); otherwise, it may simply be a preterite without the *vav* (ו) consecutive. The verb describes utter devastation. This is the verb that is used in Gen 13:10 to describe how Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Swarms of flies would disrupt life, contaminate everything, and bring disease.

⁹ sn After the plague is inflicted on the land, then Pharaoh makes an appeal. So there is the familiar confrontation (vv. 25-29). Pharaoh’s words to Moses are an advancement on his previous words. Now he uses imperatives: “Go, sacrifice to your God.” But he restricts it to “in the [this] land.” This is a subtle attempt to keep them as a subjugated people and prevent their absolute allegiance to their God. This offered compromise would destroy the point of the exodus – to leave Egypt and find a new allegiance under the LORD.

¹⁰ tn The clause is a little unusual in its formation. The form נָכֹחַ (*nakhon*) is the Niphal participle from כָּוַן (*kun*), which usually means “firm, fixed, steadfast,” but here it has a rare meaning of “right, fitting, appropriate.” It functions in the sentence as the predicate adjective, because the infinitive לַעֲשׂוֹת (*la’asot*) is the subject – “to do so is not right.”

¹¹ tn This translation has been smoothed out to capture the sense. The text literally says, “for the abomination of Egypt we will sacrifice to Yahweh our God.” In other words, the animals that Israel would sacrifice were sacred to Egypt, and sacrificing them would have been abhorrent to the Egyptians.

¹² tn An “abomination” is something that is off-limits, something that is taboo. It could be translated “detestable” or “loathsome.”

¹³ sn U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 109) says there are two ways to understand “the abomination of the Egyptians.” One is that the sacrifice of the sacred animals would appear an abominable thing in the eyes of the Egyptians, and the other is that the word “abomination” could be a derogatory term for idols – we sacrifice what is an Egyptian idol. So that is why he says

if they did this the Egyptians would stone them.

¹⁴ tn Heb “if we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians [or “of Egypt”] before their eyes.”

¹⁵ tn The interrogative clause has no particle to indicate it is a question, but it is connected with the conjunction to the preceding clause, and the meaning of these clauses indicates it is a question (GKC 473 §150.a).

¹⁶ tn The verb נָלַךְ (*nelekh*) is a Qal imperfect of the verb הָלַךְ (*halakh*). Here it should be given the modal nuance of obligation: “we must go.”

¹⁷ tn This clause is placed first in the sentence to stress the distance required. דֶּרֶךְ (*derekh*) is an adverbial accusative specifying how far they must go. It is in construct, so “three days” modifies it. It is a “journey of three days,” or, “a three day journey.”

¹⁸ tn The form is the perfect tense with a *vav* (ו) consecutive; it follows in the sequence: we must go...and then [must] sacrifice.”

¹⁹ tn The form is the imperfect tense. It could be future: “as he will tell us,” but it also could be the progressive imperfect if this is now what God is telling them to do: “as he is telling us.”

²⁰ sn By changing from “the people” to “you” (plural) the speech of Pharaoh was becoming more personal.

²¹ tn This form, a perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive, is equivalent to the imperfect tense that precedes it. However, it must be subordinate to the preceding verb to express the purpose. He is not saying “I will release...and you will sacrifice,” but rather “I will release...that you may sacrifice” or even “to sacrifice.”

²² tn The construction is very emphatic. First, it uses a verbal hendiadys with a Hiphil imperfect and the Qal infinitive construct: לֹא-תִרְחִיק לָלֶכֶת (*lo’ tarkhiq laleket*, “you will not make far to go”), meaning “you will not go far.” But this prohibition is then emphasized with the additional infinitive absolute הִרְחִיק (*harkheq*) – “you will in no wise go too far.” The point is very strong to safeguard the concession.

²³ tn “Do” has been supplied here to convey that this somewhat unexpected command is tacked onto Pharaoh’s instructions as his ultimate concern, which Moses seems to understand as such, since he speaks about it immediately (v. 29).

²⁴ tn The deictic particle with the participle usually indicates the *futur instans* nuance: “I am about to...,” or “I am going to...” The clause could also be subordinated as a temporal clause.

²⁵ tn The verb תָּלַל (*talal*) means “to mock, deceive, trifle with.” The construction in this verse forms a verbal hendiadys. The Hiphil jussive אֲלֵיֶיךָ (*al-yosef*, “let not [Pharaoh] add”) is joined with the Hiphil infinitive הִתַּל (*hatel*, “to deceive”). It means: “Let not Pharaoh deceive again.” Changing to the third person in this warning to Pharaoh is more decisive, more powerful.

releasing⁴ the people to sacrifice to the LORD.”
8:30 So Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD, **8:31** and the LORD did as Moses asked² – he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. Not one remained! **8:32** But Pharaoh hardened³ his heart this time also and did not release the people.

The Fifth Blow: Disease

9:1⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and tell him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, “Release my people that they may serve me! **9:2** For if you refuse to release them⁵ and continue holding them,⁶ **9:3** then the hand of the LORD will surely bring⁷ a very terrible plague⁸ on your livestock in the field, on the horses, the donkeys, the camels,⁹ the herds, and the flocks. **9:4** But the Lord will distinguish¹⁰ between the livestock of Israel and the

livestock of Egypt, and nothing¹¹ will die of all that the Israelites have.””¹²

9:5 The LORD set¹³ an appointed time, saying, “Tomorrow the LORD will do this¹⁴ in the land.”
9:6 And the LORD did this¹⁵ on the next day;¹⁶ all¹⁷ the livestock of the Egyptians¹⁸ died, but of the Israelites’ livestock not one died. **9:7** Pharaoh sent representatives to investigate,¹⁹ and indeed, not even one of the livestock of Israel had died. But Pharaoh’s heart remained hard,²⁰ and he did not release the people.

The Sixth Blow: Boils

9:8²¹ Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Take handfuls of soot²² from a furnace, and have Moses throw it²³ into the air while Pharaoh is watching.²⁴ **9:9** It will become fine dust over the whole land of Egypt and will cause boils to break out and fester²⁵ on both people and

1 tn The Piel infinitive construct after *lamed* (ל) and the negative functions epexegetically, explaining how Pharaoh would deal falsely – “by not releasing.”

2 tn Heb “according to the word of Moses” (so KJV, ASV).

3 tn This phrase translates the Hebrew word *קָבַד* (*kaved*); see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 53.

4 sn This plague demonstrates that Yahweh has power over the livestock of Egypt. He is able to strike the animals with disease and death, thus delivering a blow to the economic as well as the religious life of the land. By the former plagues many of the Egyptian religious ceremonies would have been interrupted and objects of veneration defiled or destroyed. Now some of the important deities will be attacked. In Goshen, where the cattle are merely cattle, no disease hits, but in the rest of Egypt it is a different matter. Osiris, the savior, cannot even save the brute in which his own soul is supposed to reside. Apis and Mnevis, the ram of Ammon, the sheep of Sais, and the goat of Mendes, perish together. Hence, Moses reminds Israel afterward, “On their gods also Yahweh executed judgments” (Num 33:4). When Jethro heard of all these events, he said, “Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all the gods” (Exod 18:11).

5 tn The object “them” is implied in the context.

6 tn *עוֹד* (*od*), an adverb meaning “yet, still,” can be inflected with suffixes and used as a predicator of existence, with the nuance “to still be, yet be” (T. O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, 171-72, §137). Then, it is joined here with the Hiphil participle *מְחַזְּקִים* (*makhaziq*) to form the sentence “you are still holding them.”

7 tn The form used here is *הוֹיָה* (*hoyah*), the Qal active participle, feminine singular, from the verb “to be.” This is the only place in the OT that this form occurs. Ogden shows that this form is appropriate with the participle *הִינֵה* (*hinneh*) to stress impending divine action, and that it conforms to the pattern in these narratives where five times the participle is used in the threat to Pharaoh (7:17; 8:2; 9:3, 14; 10:4). See G. S. Ogden, “Notes on the Use of *הוֹיָה* in Exodus IX. 3,” VT 17 (1967): 483-84.

8 tn The word *דֵּבַר* (*dever*) is usually translated “pestilence” when it applies to diseases for humans. It is used only here and in Ps 78:50 for animals.

9 sn The older view that camels were not domesticated at this time (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 70; W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, 96; et. al.) has been corrected by more recently uncovered information (see K. A. Kitchen, *NBD* 160-61).

10 tn The verb *פָּלַח* (*palah*) in Hiphil means “to set apart, make separate, make distinct.” See also Exod 8:22 (18 HT); 11:7; 33:16.

11 tn There is a wordplay in this section. A pestilence – *דֵּבַר* (*dever*) – will fall on Egypt’s cattle, but no thing – *דָּבָר* (*davar*) – belonging to Israel would die. It was perhaps for this reason that the verb was changed in v. 1 from “say” to “speak” (*דִּבֶּר*, *dibber*). See U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 111.

12 tn The *lamed* preposition indicates possession: “all that was to the Israelites” means “all that the Israelites had.”

13 tn Heb “and Yahweh set.”

14 tn Heb “this thing.”

15 tn Heb “this thing.”

16 tn Heb “on the morrow.”

17 tn The word “all” clearly does not mean “all” in the exclusive sense, because subsequent plagues involve cattle. The word must denote such a large number that whatever was left was insignificant for the economy. It could also be taken to mean “all [kinds of] livestock died.”

18 tn Heb “of Egypt.” The place is put by metonymy for the inhabitants.

19 tn Heb “Pharaoh sent.” The phrase “representatives to investigate” is implied in the context.

20 tn Heb “and the heart of Pharaoh was hardened.” This phrase translates the Hebrew word *קָבַד* (*kaved*); see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 53). In context this represents the continuation of a prior condition.

21 sn This sixth plague, like the third, is unannounced. God instructs his servants to take handfuls of ashes from the Egyptians’ furnaces and sprinkle them heavenward in the sight of Pharaoh. These ashes would become little particles of dust that would cause boils on the Egyptians and their animals. Greta Hort, “The Plagues of Egypt,” ZAW 69 [1957]: 101-3, suggests it is skin anthrax (see W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:359). The lesson of this plague is that Yahweh has absolute control over the physical health of the people. Physical suffering consequent to sin comes to all regardless of their position and status. The Egyptians are helpless in the face of this, as now God begins to touch human life; greater judgments on human wickedness lie ahead.

22 tn This word *פִּיֵּחַ* (*piakh*) is a *hapax legomenon*, meaning “soot”; it seems to be derived from the verb *פָּוַח* (*puakh*, “to breathe, blow”). The “furnace” (*כִּיּוּן*, *kivyun*) was a special kiln for making pottery or bricks.

23 tn The verb *זָרַק* (*zaraq*) means “to throw vigorously, to toss.” If Moses tosses the soot into the air, it will symbolize that the disease is falling from heaven.

24 tn Heb “before the eyes of Pharaoh.”

25 tn The word *שָׂחַן* (*shakhin*) means “boils.” It may be connected to an Arabic cognate that means “to be hot.” The illness is associated with Job (Job 2:7-8) and Hezekiah (Isa 38:21); it has also been connected with other skin diseases described especially in the Law. The word connected with it is *אֲבָבְוֹת* (*ava’bu’ot*); this means “blisters, pustules” and is sometimes translated as “festering.” The etymology is debat-

animals in all the land of Egypt.” 9:10 So they took soot from a furnace and stood before Pharaoh, Moses threw it into the air, and it caused festering boils to break out on both people and animals.

9:11 The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for boils were on the magicians and on all the Egyptians. 9:12 But the LORD hardened¹ Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had predicted to Moses.

The Seventh Blow: Hail

9:13² The LORD said³ to Moses, “Get up early in the morning, stand⁴ before Pharaoh, and tell him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: “Release my people so that they may serve me! 9:14 For this time I will send all my plagues⁵ on your very self⁶ and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. 9:15 For by now I could have stretched out⁷ my hand and struck you and your people with plague, and you would have been destroyed⁸ from the earth.

9:16 But⁹ for this purpose I have caused you to stand.¹⁰ to show you¹¹ my strength, and so that my name may be declared¹² in all the earth. 9:17 You are still exalting¹³ yourself against my people by¹⁴ not releasing them. 9:18 I am going to cause very severe hail to rain down¹⁵ about this time tomorrow, such hail as has never occurred¹⁶ in Egypt from the day it was founded¹⁷ until now. 9:19 So now, send instructions¹⁸ to gather¹⁹ your livestock and all your possessions in the fields to a safe place. Every person²⁰ or animal caught²¹ in the field and not brought into the house – the hail will come down on them, and they will die!””

9:20 Those²² of Pharaoh’s servants who feared the word of the LORD hurried to bring their²³ servants and livestock into the houses, 9:21 but those²⁴ who did not take²⁵ the word of

ed, whether from a word meaning “to swell up” or “to overflow” (W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:359).

¹ **tn** This phrase translates the Hebrew word *khazaq*; see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 53.

² **sn** With the seventh plague there is more explanation of what God is doing to Pharaoh. This plague begins with an extended lesson (vv. 13-21). Rain was almost unknown in Egypt, and hail and lightning were harmless. The Egyptians were fascinated by all these, though, and looked on them as portentous. Herodotus describes how they studied such things and wrote them down (1.2.c.38). If ordinary rainstorms were ominous, what must fire and hail have been? The Egyptians had denominated fire *Hephaistos*, considering it to be a mighty deity (cf. Diodorus, 1.1.c.1). Porphyry says that at the opening of the temple of Serapis the Egyptians worshiped with water and fire. If these connections were clearly understood, then these elements in the plague were thought to be deities that came down on their own people with death and destruction.

³ **tn** *Heb* “and Yahweh said.”

⁴ **tn** Or “take your stand.”

⁵ **tn** The expression “all my plagues” points to the rest of the plagues and anticipates the proper outcome. Another view is to take the expression to mean the full brunt of the attack on the Egyptian people.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “to your heart.” The expression is unusual, but it may be an allusion to the hard heartedness of Pharaoh – his stubbornness and blindness (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 274).

⁷ **tn** The verb is the Qal perfect *shalakhti* (*shalakhti*), but a past tense, or completed action translation does not fit the context at all. Gesenius lists this reference as an example of the use of the perfect to express actions and facts, whose accomplishment is to be represented not as actual but only as possible. He offers this for Exod 9:15: “I had almost put forth” (GKC 313 §106.p). Also possible is “I should have stretched out my hand.” Others read the potential nuance instead, and render it as “I could have...” as in the present translation.

⁸ **tn** The verb *kakhad* (*kakhad*) means “to hide, efface,” and in the Niphal it has the idea of “be effaced, ruined, destroyed.” Here it will carry the nuance of the result of the preceding verbs: “I could have stretched out my hand...and struck you...and (as a result) you would have been destroyed.”

⁹ **tn** The first word is a very strong adversative, which, in general, can be translated “but, howbeit”; BDB 19 s.v. *uylm* suggests for this passage “but in very deed.”

¹⁰ **tn** The form *he'emadikha* (*he'emadikha*) is the Hiphil perfect of *amad* (“*amad*”). It would normally mean “I caused you to stand.” But that seems to have one or two different connotations. S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 73) says that it means “maintain you alive.” The causative of this verb means “continue,” according to him. The LXX has the same basic sense – “you were preserved.” But Paul bypasses the Greek and writes “he raised you up” to show God’s absolute sovereignty over Pharaoh. Both renderings show God’s sovereign control over Pharaoh.

¹¹ **tn** The Hiphil infinitive construct *har'ot'kha* (*har'ot'kha*) is the purpose of God’s making Pharaoh come to power in the first place. To make Pharaoh see is to cause him to understand, to experience God’s power.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “in order to declare my name.” Since there is no expressed subject, this may be given a passive translation.

¹³ **tn** *mistolel* (*mistolel*) is a Hitpael participle, from a root that means “raise up, obstruct.” So in the Hitpael it means to “raise oneself up,” “elevate oneself,” or “be an obstructionist.” See W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:363; U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 116.

¹⁴ **tn** The infinitive construct with *lamed* here is exegetical; it explains how Pharaoh has exalted himself – “by not releasing the people.”

¹⁵ **tn** *hin'ni mantir* (*hin'ni mantir*) is the *futur instans* construction, giving an imminent future translation: “Here – I am about to cause it to rain.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “which not was like it in Egypt.” The pronoun suffix serves as the resumptive pronoun for the relative particle: “which...like it” becomes “the like of which has not been.” The word “hail” is added in the translation to make clear the referent of the relative particle.

¹⁷ **tn** The form *hivvasdah* (*hivvasdah*) is perhaps a rare Niphal perfect and not an infinitive (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 117).

¹⁸ **tn** The object “instructions” is implied in the context.

¹⁹ **tn** *ha'ez* (*ha'ez*) is the Hiphil imperative from *uz* (“to bring into safety” or “to secure”). Although there is no *vav* (ו) linking the two imperatives, the second could be subordinated by virtue of the meanings. “Send to bring to safety.”

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “man, human.”

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “[who] may be found.” The verb can be the imperfect of possibility.

²² **tn** The text has “the one fearing.” The singular expression here and throughout vv. 20-21 refers to all who fit the description.

²³ **tn** *Heb* “his” (singular).

²⁴ **tn** The Hebrew text again has the singular.

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “put to his heart.”

the LORD seriously left their servants and their cattle¹ in the field.

9:22 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Extend your hand toward the sky² that there may be³ hail in all the land of Egypt, on people and on animals,⁴ and on everything that grows⁵ in the field in the land of Egypt.” **9:23** When Moses extended⁶ his staff toward the sky, the LORD⁷ sent thunder⁸ and hail, and fire fell to the earth;⁹ so the LORD caused hail to rain down on the land of Egypt. **9:24** Hail fell¹⁰ and fire mingled¹¹ with the hail; the hail was so severe¹² that there had not been any like it¹³ in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. **9:25** The hail struck everything in the open fields, both¹⁴ people and animals, throughout all the land of Egypt. The hail struck everything that grows¹⁵ in the field, and it broke all the trees of the field to pieces. **9:26** Only in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, was there no hail.

1 tn Heb “his servants and his cattle.”

2 tn Or “the heavens” (also in the following verse). The Hebrew term שָׁמַיִם (*shamayim*) may be translated “heavens” or “sky” depending on the context.

3 tn The jussive with the conjunction (וְיָהִי, *vihhi*) coming after the imperative provides the purpose or result.

4 tn Heb “on man and on beast.”

5 tn The noun refers primarily to cultivated grains. But here it seems to be the general heading for anything that grows from the ground, all vegetation and plant life, as opposed to what grows on trees.

6 tn The preterite with the *vav* (ו) consecutive is here subordinated to the next clause in view of the emphasis put on the subject, Yahweh, by the disjunctive word order of that clause.

7 tn By starting the clause with the subject (an example of disjunctive word order) the text is certainly stressing that Yahweh alone did this.

8 tn The expression נָתַן קוֹלֹת (natan qolot) literally means “gave voices” (also “voice”). This is a poetic expression for sending the thunder. Ps 29:3 talks about the “voice of Yahweh” – the God of glory thunders!

9 sn This clause has been variously interpreted. Lightning would ordinarily accompany thunder; in this case the mention of fire could indicate that the lightning was beyond normal and that it was striking in such a way as to start fires on the ground. It could also mean that fire went along the ground from the pounding hail.

10 tn The verb is the common preterite וַיָּהִי (*vayehi*), which is normally translated “and there was” if it is translated at all. The verb הָיָה (*hayah*), however, can mean “be, become, befall, fall, fall out, happen.” Here it could be simply translated “there was hail,” but the active “hail fell” fits the point of the sentence better.

11 tn The form מִתְּלַקְחָת (mitlakqhat) is a Hitpaal participle; the clause reads, “and fire taking hold of itself in the midst of the hail.” This probably refers to lightning flashing back and forth. See also Ezek 1:4. God created a great storm with flashing fire connected to it.

12 tn Heb “very heavy” or “very severe.” The subject “the hail” is implied.

13 tn A literal reading of the clause would be “which there was not like it in all the land of Egypt.” The relative pronoun must be joined to the resumptive pronoun: “which like it (like which) there had not been.”

14 tn The exact expression is “from man even to beast.” R. J. Williams lists this as an example of the inclusive use of the preposition מִן (*min*) to be rendered “both...and” (*Hebrew Syntax*, 57, §327).

15 tn Heb “all the cultivated grain of.”

9:27 So Pharaoh sent and summoned Moses and Aaron and said to them, “I have sinned this time!¹⁶ The LORD is righteous, and I and my people are guilty.¹⁷ **9:28** Pray to the LORD, for the mighty¹⁸ thunderings and hail are too much!¹⁹ I will release you and you will stay no longer.”²⁰

9:29 Moses said to him, “When I leave the city²¹ I will spread my hands to the LORD, the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth belongs to the LORD.²² **9:30** But as for you²³ and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear²⁴ the LORD God.”

16 sn Pharaoh now is struck by the judgment and acknowledges that he is at fault. But the context shows that this confession is uncertain. On the surface his words seem to represent a recognition that he is in the wrong and Yahweh right.

17 tn The word רָשָׁע (*rasha'*) can mean “ungodly, wicked, guilty, criminal.” Pharaoh here is saying that Yahweh is right, and the Egyptians are not – so they are at fault, guilty. S. R. Driver says the words are used in their forensic sense (in the right or wrong standing legally) and not in the ethical sense of morally right and wrong (*Exodus*, 75).

18 sn The text has Heb “the voices of God.” The divine epithet can be used to express the superlative (cf. *Jonah* 3:3).

19 tn The expression וְיָרַב בּוֹדֵי (vayrav mibodi, “[the mighty thunder and hail] is much from being”) means essentially “more than enough.” This indicates that the storm was too much, or, as one might say, “It is enough.”

20 tn The last clause uses a verbal hendiadys: “you will not add to stand,” meaning “you will no longer stay.”

21 tn The expression בְּיַמֵּי (beyamey) is the Qal infinitive construct of יָמָה (*yat-sa'*); it functions here as the temporal clause before the statement about prayer.

sn There has been a good deal of speculation about why Moses would leave the city before praying. Rashi said he did not want to pray where there were so many idols. It may also be as the midrash in *Exodus Rabbah* 12:5 says that most of the devastation of this plague had been outside in the fields, and that was where Moses wished to go.

22 sn This clause provides the purpose/result of Moses' intention: he will pray to Yahweh and the storms will cease “that you might know....” It was not enough to pray and have the plague stop. Pharaoh must “know” that Yahweh is the sovereign Lord over the earth. Here was that purpose of knowing through experience. This clause provides the key for the exposition of this plague: God demonstrated his power over the forces of nature to show his sovereignty – the earth is Yahweh's. He can destroy it. He can preserve it. If people sin by ignoring his word and not fearing him, he can bring judgment on them. If any fear Yahweh and obey his instructions, they will be spared. A positive way to express the expositional point of the chapter is to say that those who fear Yahweh and obey his word will escape the powerful destruction he has prepared for those who sinfully disregard his word.

23 tn The verse begins with the disjunctive *vav* to mark a strong contrastive clause to what was said before this.

24 tn The adverb בְּרֵעַם (*terem*, “before, not yet”) occurs with the imperfect tense to give the sense of the English present tense to the verb negated by it (GKC 314-15 §107.c). Moses is saying that he knew that Pharaoh did not really stand in awe of God, so as to grant Israel's release, i.e., fear not in the religious sense but “be afraid of” God – fear “before” him (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 76).

9:31 (Now the¹ flax and the barley were struck² by the hail,³ for the barley had ripened⁴ and the flax⁵ was in bud. 9:32 But the wheat and the spelt⁶ were not struck, for they are later crops.)⁷

9:33 So Moses left Pharaoh, went out of the city, and spread out his hands to the LORD, and the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain stopped pouring on the earth. 9:34 When Pharaoh saw⁸ that the rain and hail and thunder ceased, he sinned again.⁹ both he and his servants hardened¹⁰ their hearts. 9:35 So Pharaoh's heart remained hard,¹¹ and he did not release the Israelites, as the LORD had predicted through Moses.

The Eighth Blow: Locusts

10:1¹² The LORD said¹³ to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, in order to display¹⁴ these signs of mine before him,¹⁵ 10:2 and in order that in the hearing of your son and your grandson you may tell¹⁶ how I made fools¹⁷ of the Egyptians¹⁸ and about¹⁹ my signs that I displayed²⁰ among them, so that you may know²¹ that I am the LORD."

10:3 So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh and told him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews: 'How long do you refuse²² to humble yourself before me?'²³ Release my peo-

¹ tn A disjunctive *vav* introduces the two verses that provide parenthetical information to the reader. Gesenius notes that the boldness of such clauses is often indicated by the repetition of nouns at the beginning (see GKC 452 §141.d). Some have concluded that because they have been put here rather than back after v. 25 or 26, they form part of Moses' speech to Pharaoh, explaining that the crops that were necessary for humans were spared, but those for other things were destroyed. This would also mean that Moses was saying there is more that God can destroy (see B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 279).

² tn The unusual forms נִכְרַתָּהּ (nukkatah) in v. 31 and נִכְרַתָּהּ (nukku) in v. 32 are probably to be taken as old Qal passives. There are no attested Piel uses of the root.

³ tn The words "by the hail" are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied from context.

⁴ tn Heb "was in the ear" (so KJV, NAB, NASB, NRSV); NIV "had headed."

⁵ sn Flax was used for making linen, and the area around Tanis was ideal for producing flax. Barley was used for bread for the poor people, as well as beer and animal feed.

⁶ tn The word כֹּסֶמֶת (kussemet) is translated "spelt"; the word occurs only here and in Isa 28:25 and Ezek 4:9. Spelt is a grain closely allied to wheat. Other suggestions have been brought forward from the study of Egyptian crops (see a brief summary in W. C. Kaiser, Jr., "Exodus," *EBC* 2:363-64).

⁷ tn Heb "for they are late."

⁸ tn The clause beginning with the preterite and *vav* (ו) consecutive is here subordinated to the next, and main clause – that he hardened his heart again.

⁹ tn The construction is another verbal hendiadys: וַיִּסְרֹף לַחֲטָוֹ (vayyosef lakhatto), literally rendered "and he added to sin." The infinitive construct becomes the main verb, and the Hiphil preterite becomes adverbial. The text is clearly interpreting as sin the hardening of Pharaoh's heart and his refusal to release Israel. At the least this means that the plagues are his fault, but the expression probably means more than this – he was disobeying Yahweh God.

¹⁰ tn This phrase translates the Hebrew word קָבַד (kaved); see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 53.

¹¹ tn The verb about Pharaoh's heart in v. 35 is וַיַּחֲזֶק (vayyakhzeq), a Qal preterite: "and it was hardened" or "strengthened to resist." This forms the summary statement of this stage in the drama. The verb used in v. 34 to report Pharaoh's response was וַיִּכְבְּד (vayyakhbed), a Hiphil preterite: "and he hardened [his heart]" or made it stubborn. The use of two descriptions of Pharaoh's heart in close succession, along with mention of his servants' heart condition, underscores the growing extent of the problem.

¹² sn The Egyptians dreaded locusts like every other ancient civilization. They had particular gods to whom they looked for help in such catastrophes. The locust-scaring deities of Greece and Asia were probably looked to in Egypt as well (especially in view of the origins in Egypt of so many of those religious ideas). The announcement of the plague falls into the now-familiar pattern. God tells Moses to go and speak to Pharaoh but reminds Moses that he has hardened his heart. Yahweh explains that he has done this so that he might show his power, so that in turn they might declare his name from generation to generation. This point is stressed so often that it must not be minimized. God was laying the foundation of the faith for Israel – the sovereignty of Yahweh.

¹³ tn Heb "and Yahweh said."

¹⁴ tn The verb is שִׁוִּי (shii, "I have put"); it is used here as a synonym for the verb שִׁמַּי (sim). Yahweh placed the signs in his midst, where they will be obvious.

¹⁵ tn Heb "in his midst."

¹⁶ tn The expression is unusual: הִסְפַּר בְּאָזְנוֹי (hissapper b'ozne, "[that] you may declare in the ears of"). The clause explains an additional reason for God's hardening the heart of Pharaoh, namely, so that the Israelites can tell their children of God's great wonders. The expression is highly poetic and intense – like Ps 44:1, which says, "we have heard with our ears." The emphasis would be on the clear teaching, orally, from one generation to another.

¹⁷ tn The verb הִתְעַלְלֵתִי (hit'allalti) is a bold anthropomorphism. The word means to occupy oneself at another's expense, to toy with someone, which may be paraphrased with "mock." The whole point is that God is shaming and disgracing Egypt, making them look foolish in their arrogance and stubbornness (W. C. Kaiser, Jr., "Exodus," *EBC* 2:366-67). Some prefer to translate it as "I have dealt ruthlessly" with Egypt (see U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 123).

¹⁸ tn Heb "of Egypt." The place is put by metonymy for the inhabitants.

¹⁹ tn The word "about" is supplied to clarify this as another object of the verb "declare."

²⁰ tn Heb "put" or "placed."

²¹ tn The form is the perfect tense with *vav* consecutive, וַיִּדְבַּרְתָּ (vida'tem, "and that you might know"). This provides another purpose for God's dealings with Egypt in the way that he was doing. The form is equal to the imperfect tense with *vav* (ו) prefixed; it thus parallels the imperfect that began v. 2 – "that you might tell."

²² tn The verb is בָּאֲנָתָהּ (me'anta), a Piel perfect. After "how long," the form may be classified as present perfect ("how long have you refused), for it describes actions begun previously but with the effects continuing. (See GKC 311 §106.g-h). The use of a verb describing a state or condition may also call for a present translation ("how long do you refuse") that includes past, present, and potentially future, in keeping with the question "how long."

²³ tn The clause is built on the use of the infinitive construct to express the direct object of the verb – it answers the question of what Pharaoh was refusing to do. The Niphal infinitive

ple so that they may serve me! **10:4** But if you refuse to release my people, I am going to bring¹ locusts² into your territory³ tomorrow. **10:5** They will cover⁴ the surface⁵ of the earth, so that you⁶ will be unable to see the ground. They will eat the remainder of what escaped⁷ – what is left over⁸ for you – from the hail, and they will eat every tree that grows for you from the field. **10:6** They will fill your houses, the houses of your servants, and all the houses of Egypt, such as⁹ neither¹⁰ your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen since they have been¹¹ in the land until this day!¹² Then Moses¹² turned and went out from Pharaoh.

10:7 Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long¹³ will this man be a menace¹⁴ to us? Release the people so that they may serve the LORD

their God. Do you not know¹⁵ that Egypt is destroyed?"

10:8 So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the LORD your God. Exactly who is going with you?"¹⁶

10:9 Moses said, "We will go with our young and our old, with our sons and our daughters, and with our sheep and our cattle we will go, because we are to hold¹⁷ a pilgrim feast for the LORD."

10:10 He said to them, "The LORD will need to be with you¹⁸ if I release you and your dependents!¹⁹ Watch out!²⁰ Trouble is right in front of you!²¹ **10:11** No!²² Go, you men²³ only, and serve the LORD, for that²⁴ is what you want."²⁵ Then Moses and Aaron²⁶ were driven²⁷ out of Pharaoh's presence.

¹⁵ tn With the adverb בְּתֵרֵם (*terem*), the imperfect tense receives a present sense: "Do you not know?" (See GKC 481 §152.r).

¹⁶ tn The question is literally "who and who are the ones going?" בְּיָנֵי הַדְּלָבִים (*mi vami hahol^lkhim*). Pharaoh's answer to Moses includes this rude question, which was intended to say that Pharaoh would control who went. The participle in this clause, then, refers to the future journey.

¹⁷ tn Heb "we have a pilgrim feast (חַג, *khag*) to Yahweh."

¹⁸ sn Pharaoh is by no means offering a blessing on the name of Yahweh. The meaning of his "wish" is connected to the next clause – as he is releasing them, may God help them. S. R. Driver says that in Pharaoh's scornful challenge Yahweh is as likely to protect them as Pharaoh is likely to let them go – not at all (*Exodus*, 80). He is planning to keep the women and children as hostages to force the men to return. U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 125) paraphrases it this way: "May the help of your God be as far from you as I am from giving you permission to go forth with your little ones." The real irony, Cassuto observes, is that in the final analysis he will let them go, and Yahweh will be with them.

¹⁹ tn The context of Moses' list of young and old, sons and daughters, and the contrast with the word for strong "men" in v. 11 indicates that עֲבָדָם (*app^lkhem*), often translated "little ones" or "children," refers to dependent people, noncombatants in general.

²⁰ tn Heb "see."

²¹ tn Heb "before your face."

²² sn The "trouble" or "evil" that is before them could refer to the evil that they are devising – the attempt to escape from Egypt. But that does not make much sense in the sentence – why would he tell them to take heed or look out about that? U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 126) makes a better suggestion. He argues that Pharaoh is saying, "Don't push me too far." The evil, then, would be what Pharaoh was going to do if these men kept making demands on him. This fits the fact that he had them driven out of his court immediately. There could also be here an allusion to Pharaoh's god *Re*, the sun-deity and head of the pantheon; he would be saying that the power of his god would confront them.

²³ tn Heb "not thus."

²⁴ tn The word is הַגְּבָרִים (*hagg^lvarim*, "the strong men"), a word different from the more general one that Pharaoh's servants used (v. 7). Pharaoh appears to be conceding, but he is holding hostages. The word "only" has been supplied in the translation to indicate this.

²⁵ tn The suffix on the sign of the accusative refers in a general sense to the idea contained in the preceding clause (see GKC 440-41 §135.p).

²⁶ tn Heb "you are seeking."

²⁷ tn Heb "they"; the referent (Moses and Aaron) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁸ tn The verb is the Piel preterite, third person masculine singular, meaning "and he drove them out." But "Pharaoh" cannot be the subject of the sentence, for "Pharaoh" is the object of the preposition. The subject is not specified, and so the verb can be treated as passive.

construct (note the elision of the ה [he] prefix after the preposition [see GKC 139 §51.l]) is from the verb יָגֵד (*anah*). The verb in this stem would mean "humble oneself." The question is somewhat rhetorical, since God was not yet through humbling Pharaoh, who would not humble himself. The issue between Yahweh and Pharaoh is deeper than simply whether or not Pharaoh will let the Israelites leave Egypt.

¹ tn חֲבִיטֵי (*hinni*) before the active participle מְבִיאֵי (*mevi*) is the imminent future construction: "I am about to bring" or "I am going to bring" – precisely, "here I am bringing."

² tn One of the words for "locusts" in the Bible is אֲרֵבָה (*arbeh*), which comes from רָבָה (*ravah*, "to be much, many"). It was used for locusts because of their immense numbers.

³ tn Heb "within your border."

⁴ tn The verbs describing the locusts are singular because it is a swarm or plague of locusts. This verb (יָכַסָּה, *v^lkhissah*, "cover") is a Piel perfect with a *vav* consecutive; it carries the same future nuance as the participle before it.

⁵ tn Heb "eye," an unusual expression (see v. 15; Num 22:5, 11).

⁶ tn The text has לֹרְאֵת וְלֹא יִכְלֶה (*v^lo' yukhal lir'ot*, "and he will not be able to see"). The verb has no expressed subjects. The clause might, therefore, be given a passive translation: "so that [it] cannot be seen." The whole clause is the result of the previous statement.

⁷ sn As the next phrase explains "what escaped" refers to what the previous plague did not destroy. The locusts will devour everything, because there will not be much left from the other plagues for them to eat.

⁸ tn הַנִּשְׁאָרֵת (*hamnish'eret*) parallels (by apposition) and adds further emphasis to the preceding two words; it is the Niphal participle, meaning "that which is left over."

⁹ tn The relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר (*asher*) is occasionally used as a comparative conjunction (see GKC 499 §161.b).

¹⁰ tn Heb "which your fathers have not seen, nor your fathers' fathers."

¹¹ tn The Hebrew construction מֵיּוֹם הַיְיָוִם (*miyyom heyoyam*, "from the day of their being"). The statement essentially says that no one, even the elderly, could remember seeing a plague of locusts like this. In addition, see B. Childs, "A Study of the Formula, 'Until This Day,'" *JBL* 82 (1963).

¹² tn Heb "he"; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹³ sn The question of Pharaoh's servants echoes the question of Moses – "How long?" Now the servants of Pharaoh are demanding what Moses demanded – "Release the people." They know that the land is destroyed, and they speak of it as Moses' doing. That way they avoid acknowledging Yahweh or blaming Pharaoh.

¹⁴ tn Heb "snare" (מוֹקֵשׁ, *moqesh*), a word used for a trap for catching birds. Here it is a figure for the cause of Egypt's destruction.

10:12 The LORD said to Moses, “Extend your hand over the land of Egypt for¹ the locusts, that they may come up over the land of Egypt and eat everything that grows² in the ground, everything that the hail has left.” **10:13** So Moses extended his staff over the land of Egypt, and then the LORD³ brought⁴ an east wind on the land all that day and all night.⁵ The morning came,⁶ and the east wind had brought up⁷ the locusts! **10:14** The locusts went up over all the land of Egypt and settled down in all the territory⁸ of Egypt. It was very severe;⁹ there had been no locusts like them before, nor will there be such ever again.¹⁰ **10:15** They covered¹¹ the surface¹² of all the ground, so that the ground became dark with them,¹³ and they ate all the vegetation of the ground and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Nothing green remained on the trees or on anything that grew in the fields throughout the whole land of Egypt.

10:16¹⁴ Then Pharaoh quickly¹⁵ summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “I have sinned¹⁶ against the LORD your God and against you! **10:17** So now, forgive my sin this time only, and pray to the LORD your God that he would only¹⁷ take this death¹⁸ away from me.” **10:18** Moses¹⁹ went out²⁰ from Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD, **10:19** and the LORD turned a very strong west wind,²¹ and it picked up the locusts and blew them into the Red Sea.²² Not one locust remained in all the territory of Egypt. **10:20** But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not release the Israelites.

1 tn The preposition ב (bet) is unexpected here. BDB 91 s.v. (the note at the end of the entry) says that in this case it can only be read as “with the locusts,” meaning that the locusts were thought to be implicit in Moses’ lifting up of his hand. However, BDB prefers to change the preposition to ל (lamed).

2 tn The noun עֵשֶׂב (‘esev) normally would indicate cultivated grains, but in this context seems to indicate plants in general.

3 tn The clause begins יְיָהוָה (va’adonay [vayhvah], “Now Yahweh....”). In contrast to a normal sequence, this beginning focuses attention on Yahweh as the subject of the verb.

4 tn The verb נָהַג (nahag) means “drive, conduct.” It is elsewhere used for driving sheep, leading armies, or leading in processions.

5 tn Heb “and all the night.”

6 tn The text does not here use ordinary circumstantial clause constructions; rather, Heb “the morning was, and the east wind carried the locusts.” It clearly means “when it was morning,” but the style chosen gives a more abrupt beginning to the plague, as if the reader is in the experience – and at morning, the locusts are there!

7 tn The verb here is a past perfect, indicating that the locusts had arrived before the day came.

8 tn Heb “border.”

9 tn This is an interpretive translation. The clause simply has כָּבֵד כְּבֹד (kaved m’od), the stative verb with the adverb – “it was very heavy.” The description prepares for the following statement about the uniqueness of this locust infestation.

10 tn Heb “after them.”

11 tn Heb “and they covered.”

12 tn Heb “eye,” an unusual expression (see v. 5; Num 22:5, 11).

13 tn The verb is וַתִּהְיֶה (vattekhsakh, “and it became dark”). The idea is that the ground had the color of the swarms of locusts that covered it.

14 sn The third part of the passage now begins, the confrontation that resulted from the onslaught of the plague. Pharaoh goes a step further here – he confesses he has sinned and adds a request for forgiveness. But his acknowledgment does not go far enough, for this is not genuine confession. Since his heart was not yet submissive, his confession was vain.

15 tn The Piel preterite וַיַּמְהַר (vaymaher) could be translated “and he hastened,” but here it is joined with the following infinitive construct to form the hendiadys. “He hurried to summon” means “He summoned quickly.”

16 sn The severity of the plague prompted Pharaoh to confess his sin against Yahweh and them, now in much stronger terms than before. He also wants forgiveness – but in all probability what he wants is relief from the consequences of his sin. He pretended to convey to Moses that this was it, that he was through sinning, so he asked for forgiveness “only this time.”

17 sn Pharaoh’s double emphasis on “only” uses two different words and was meant to deceive. He was trying to give Moses the impression that he had finally come to his senses, and that he would let the people go. But he had no intention of letting them out.

18 sn “Death” is a metonymy that names the effect for the cause. If the locusts are left in the land it will be death to everything that grows.

19 tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

20 tn Heb “and he went out.”

21 tn Or perhaps “sea wind,” i.e., a wind off the Mediterranean.

22 tn The Hebrew name here is יַם סוּף (Yam Suf), sometimes rendered “Reed Sea” or “Sea of Reeds.” The word סוּף is a collective noun that may have derived from an Egyptian name for papyrus reeds. Many English versions have used “Red Sea,” which translates the name that ancient Greeks used: ἐρυθρά θάλασσα (eruthra thalassa).

sn The name Red Sea is currently applied to the sea west of the Arabian Peninsula. The northern fingers of this body of water extend along the west and east sides of the Sinai Peninsula and are presently called the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba or the Gulf of Eilat. In ancient times the name applied to a much larger body of water, including the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf (C. Houtman, *Exodus*, 1:109-10). See also Num 14:25; 21:4; Deut 1:40; 2:1; Judg 11:16; 1 Kgs 9:26; Jer 49:21. The sea was deep enough to drown the entire Egyptian army later (and thus no shallow swamp land). God drives the locusts to their death in the water. He will have the same power over Egyptian soldiers, for he raised up this powerful empire for a purpose and soon will drown them in the sea. The message for the Israelites is that God will humble all who refuse to submit.

The Ninth Blow: Darkness

10:21¹ The LORD said to Moses, “Extend your hand toward heaven² so that there may be³ darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness so thick it can be felt.”⁴

10:22 So Moses extended his hand toward heaven, and there was absolute darkness⁵ throughout the land of Egypt for three days.⁶ **10:23** No one⁷ could see⁸ another person, and no one could rise from his place for three days. But the Israelites had light in the places where they lived.

10:24 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, “Go, serve the LORD – only your flocks and herds will be detained. Even your families⁹ may go with you.”

¹ **sn** The ninth plague is that darkness fell on all the land – except on Israel. This plague is comparable to the silence in heaven, just prior to the last and terrible plague (Rev 8:1). Here Yahweh is attacking a core Egyptian religious belief as well as portraying what lay before the Egyptians. Throughout the Bible darkness is the symbol of evil, chaos, and judgment. Blindness is one of its manifestations (see Deut 28:27-29). But the plague here is not blindness, or even spiritual blindness, but an awesome darkness from outside (see Joel 2:2; Zeph 1:15). It is particularly significant in that Egypt’s high god was the Sun God. Lord Sun was now being shut down by Lord Yahweh. If Egypt would not let Israel go to worship their God, then Egypt’s god would be darkness. The structure is familiar: the plague, now unannounced (21-23), and then the confrontation with Pharaoh (24-27).

² **tn** Or “the sky” (also in the following verse). The Hebrew term שָׁמַיִם (*shamayim*) may be translated “heavens” or “sky” depending on the context.

³ **sn** The verb form is the jussive with the sequential *vav* – וַיְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ (*vihī khoshekh*). B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 286) notes this as the only instance where Scripture says, “Let there be darkness” (although it is subordinated as a purpose clause; cf. Gen 1:3). Isa 45:7 alluded to this by saying, “who created light and darkness.”

⁴ **tn** The Hebrew term מוֹשֵׁךְ (*mush*) means “to feel.” The literal rendering would be “so that one may feel darkness.” The image portrays an oppressive darkness; it was sufficiently thick to possess the appearance of substance, although it was just air (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 286).

⁵ **tn** The construction is a variation of the superlative genitive: a substantive in the construct state is connected to a noun with the same meaning (see GKC 431 §133.i).

⁶ **sn** S. R. Driver says, “The darkness was no doubt occasioned really by a sand-storm, produced by the hot electrical wind...which blows in intermittently...” (*Exodus*, 82, 83). This is another application of the antisupernatural approach to these texts. The text, however, is probably describing something that was not a seasonal wind, or Pharaoh would not have been intimidated. If it coincided with that season, then what is described here is so different and so powerful that the Egyptians would have known the difference easily. Pharaoh here would have had to have been impressed that this was something very abnormal, and that his god was powerless. Besides, there was light in all the dwellings of the Israelites.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “a man...his brother.”

⁸ **tn** The perfect tense in this context requires the somewhat rare classification of a potential perfect.

⁹ **tn** Or “dependents.” The term is often translated “your little ones,” but as mentioned before (10:10), this expression in these passages takes in women and children and other dependents. Pharaoh will now let all the people go, but he intends to detain the cattle to secure their return.

10:25 But Moses said, “Will you also¹⁰ provide us¹¹ with sacrifices and burnt offerings that we may present them¹² to the LORD our God?”

10:26 Our livestock must¹³ also go with us! Not a hoof is to be left behind! For we must take¹⁴ these animals¹⁵ to serve the LORD our God. Until we arrive there, we do not know what we must use to serve the LORD.”¹⁶

10:27 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he was not willing to release them. **10:28** Pharaoh said to him, “Go from me!¹⁷ Watch out for yourself! Do not appear before me again,¹⁸ for when¹⁹ you see my face you will die!” **10:29** Moses said, “As you wish!²⁰ I will not see your face again.”²¹

¹⁰ **tn** B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 287) shows that the intent of Moses in using גַּם (*gam*) is to make an emphatic rhetorical question. He cites other samples of the usage in Num 22:33; 1 Sam 17:36; 2 Sam 12:14, and others. The point is that if Pharaoh told them to go and serve Yahweh, they had to have animals to sacrifice. If Pharaoh was holding the animals back, he would have to make some provision.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “give into our hand.”

¹² **tn** The form here is וְעָשִׂינוּ (*v^e asinū*), the Qal perfect with a *vav* (ו) consecutive – “and we will do.” But the verb means “do” in the sacrificial sense – prepare them, offer them. The verb form is to be subordinated here to form a purpose or result clause.

¹³ **tn** This is the obligatory imperfect nuance. They were obliged to take the animals if they were going to sacrifice, but more than that, since they were not coming back, they had to take everything.

¹⁴ **tn** The same modal nuance applies to this verb.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “from it,” referring collectively to the livestock.

¹⁶ **sn** Moses gives an angry but firm reply to Pharaoh’s attempt to control Israel; he makes it clear that he has no intention of leaving any pledge with Pharaoh. When they leave, they will take everything that belongs to them.

¹⁷ **tn** The expression לֵךְ מֵעָלַי (*lek me’alay*, “go from on me”) with the adversative use of the preposition, meaning from being a trouble or a burden to me (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 84; R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 51, §288).

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “add to see my face.” The construction uses a verbal hendiadys: “do not add to see” (אֵלֶיךָ רֹאֶה, *al-toseph re’ot*), meaning “do not see again.” The phrase “see my face” means “come before me” or “appear before me.”

¹⁹ **tn** The construction is בְּיוֹם רֹאֶתְךָ (*b^eyom re’ot^ekha*), an adverbial clause of time made up of the prepositional phrase, the infinitive construct, and the suffixed subjective genitive. “In the day of your seeing” is “when you see.”

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “Thus you have spoken.”

²¹ **tn** This is a verbal hendiadys construction: “I will not add again [to] see.”

The Tenth Blow: Death

11:1¹ The LORD said to Moses, “I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will release you from this place. When he releases you,² he will drive you out completely³ from this place. 11:2 Instruct⁴ the people that each man and each woman is to request⁵ from his or her neighbor⁶ items of silver and gold.”⁷

¹ **sn** The last plague is the most severe; it is that for which all the others were preliminary warnings. Up to this point Yahweh had been showing his power to destroy Pharaoh, and now he would begin to do so by bringing death to the Egyptians, a death that would fulfill the warning of talionic judgment – “let my son go, or I will kill your son.” The passage records the announcement of the judgment first to Moses and then through Moses to Pharaoh. The first two verses record the word of God to Moses. This is followed by a parenthetical note about how God had elevated Moses and Israel in the eyes of Egypt (v. 3). Then there is the announcement to Pharaoh (vv. 4-8). This is followed by a parenthetical note on how God had hardened Pharaoh so that Yahweh would be elevated over him. It is somewhat problematic here that Moses is told not to see Pharaoh’s face again. On the one hand, given the nature of Pharaoh to blow hot and cold and to change his mind, it is not impossible for another meeting to have occurred. But Moses said he would not do it (v. 29). One solution some take is to say that the warning in 10:28 originally stood after chapter 11. A change like that is unwarranted, and without support. It may be that vv. 1-3 are parenthetical, so that the announcement in v. 4 follows closely after 10:29 in the chronology. The instruction to Moses in 11:1 might then have been given before he left Pharaoh or even before the interview in 10:24-29 took place. Another possibility, supported by usage in Akkadian, is that the expression “see my face” (and in v. 29 “see your face”) has to do with seeking to have an official royal audience (W. H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18* [AB], 342). Pharaoh thinks that he is finished with Moses, but as 11:8 describes, Moses expects that in fact Moses will soon be the one in a position like that of royalty granting an audience to Egyptians.

² **tn** The expression בְּשִׁירוֹ כָּלָה (k^osal^lkho kalah) is difficult. It seems to say, “as/when he releases [you] altogether.” The LXX has “and when he sends you forth with everything.” *Tg. Onq.* and modern translators make *kala* adverbial, “completely” or “altogether.” B. S. Childs follows an emendation to read, “as one sends away a bride” (*Exodus* [OTL], 130). W. C. Kaiser prefers the view of Yaron that would render it “in the manner of one’s sending away a *kallah* [a slave purchased to be one’s daughter-in-law]” (“Exodus,” *EBC* 2:370). The last two readings call for revising the vocalization and introducing a rare word into the narrative. The simplest approach is to follow a meaning “when he releases [you] altogether,” i.e., with all your people and your livestock.

³ **tn** The words are emphatic: גָּרַשׁ יָגֵרֶשׁ (garesh y^ogaresh). The Piel verb means “to drive out, expel.” With the infinitive absolute it says that Pharaoh “will drive you out vigorously.” He will be glad to be rid of you – it will be a total expulsion.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “Speak now in the ears of the people.” The expression is emphatic; it seeks to ensure that the Israelites hear the instruction.

⁵ **tn** The verb translated “request” is יָשַׁא (y^oshish’alu), the Qal jussive: “let them ask.” This is the point introduced in Exod 3:22. The meaning of the verb might be stronger than simply “ask”; it might have something of the idea of “implore” (see also its use in the naming of Samuel, who was “asked” from Yahweh [1 Sam 1:20]).

⁶ **tn** “each man is to request from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor.”

sn Here *neighbor* refers to Egyptian neighbors, who are glad to see them go (12:33) and so willingly give their jewelry and vessels.

⁷ **sn** See D. Skinner, “Some Major Themes of Exodus,” *Mid-America Theological Journal* 1 (1977): 31-42.

11:3 (Now the LORD granted the people favor with⁸ the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, respected by Pharaoh’s servants and by the Egyptian people.)⁹

11:4 Moses said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘About midnight¹⁰ I will go throughout Egypt,¹¹ 11:5 and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh¹² who sits on his throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle.

11:6 There will be a great cry throughout the whole land of Egypt, such as there has never been,¹³ nor ever will be again.¹⁴ 11:7 But against any of the Israelites not even a dog will bark¹⁵ against either people or animals,¹⁶ so that you may know that the LORD distinguishes¹⁷ between Egypt and Israel.’

11:8 All these your servants will come down to me and bow down¹⁸ to me, saying, ‘Go, you and all

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “in the eyes of.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “in the eyes of the servants of Pharaoh and in the eyes of the people.” In the translation the word “Egyptian” has been supplied to clarify that the Egyptians and not the Israelites are meant here.

sn The presence of this clause about Moses, which is parenthetical in nature, further indicates why the Egyptians gave rather willingly to the Israelites. They were impressed by Moses’ miracles and his power with Pharaoh. Moses was great in stature – powerful and influential.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “about the middle of the night.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “I will go out in the midst of Egypt.”

¹² **sn** The firstborn in Egyptian and Israelite cultures was significant, but the *firstborn of Pharaoh* was most important. Pharaoh was considered a god, the son of Re, the sun god, for the specific purpose of ruling over Re’s chief concern, the land of Egypt. For the purpose of re-creation, the supreme god assumed the form of the living king and gave seed which was to become the next king and the next “son of Re.” Moreover, the Pharaoh was the incarnation of the god Horus, a falcon god whose province was the heavens. Horus represented the living king who succeeded the dead king Osiris. Every living king was Horus, every dead king Osiris (see J. A. Wilson, “Egypt,” *Before Philosophy*, 83-84). To strike any firstborn was to destroy the heir, who embodied the hopes and aspirations of the Egyptians, but to strike the firstborn son of Pharaoh was to destroy this cardinal doctrine of the divine kingship of Egypt. Such a blow would be enough for Pharaoh, for then he would drive the Israelites out.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “which like it there has never been.”

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and like it it will not add.”

¹⁵ **tn** Or perhaps “growl”; *Heb* “not a dog will sharpen his tongue.” The expression is unusual, but it must indicate that not only would no harm come to the Israelites, but that no unfriendly threat would come against them either – not even so much as a dog barking. It is possible this is to be related to the watchdog (see F. C. Fensham, “Remarks on Keret 114^b – 136^a,” *JNSL* 11 [1983]: 75).

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “against man or beast.”

¹⁷ **tn** The verb בָּלָה (palah) in Hiphil means “to set apart, make separate, make distinct.” See also Exod 8:22 (18 HT); 9:4; 33:16.

¹⁸ **sn** Moses’ anger is expressed forcefully. “He had appeared before Pharaoh a dozen times either as God’s emissary or when summoned by Pharaoh, but he would not come again; now they would have to search him out if they needed help” (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 289-90).

the people who follow¹ you,⁷ and after that I will go out.” Then Moses² went out from Pharaoh in great anger.

11:9 The LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that my wonders³ may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.”

11:10 So Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not release the Israelites from his land.

The Institution of the Passover

12:1⁴ The LORD said⁵ to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt,⁶ **12:2** “This month is to be your beginning of months; it will be your first month of the year.⁷ **12:3** Tell the whole community of Israel, ‘In the tenth day of this month they each⁸ must take a lamb⁹ for themselves according to their families¹⁰ – a lamb for each household.¹¹ **12:4** If any household is too small¹² for a lamb,¹³ the man¹⁴ and his next-door neighbor¹⁵

¹ tn Heb “that are at your feet.”

² tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³ sn The thought is essentially the same as in Exod 7:3-4, but the wonders, or portents, here refer to what is yet to be done in Egypt.

⁴ sn Chapter 12 details the culmination of the ten plagues on Egypt and the beginning of the actual deliverance from bondage. Moreover, the celebration of this festival of Passover was to become a central part of the holy calendar of Israel. The contents of this chapter have significance for NT studies as well, since the Passover was a type of the death of Jesus. The structure of this section before the crossing of the sea is as follows: the institution of the Passover (12:1-28), the night of farewell and departure (12:29-42), slaves and strangers (12:43-51), and the laws of the firstborn (13:1-16). In this immediate section there is the institution of the Passover itself (12:1-13), then the Unleavened Bread (12:14-20), and then the report of the response of the people (12:21-28).

⁵ tn Heb “and Yahweh said.”

⁶ tn Heb “saying.”

⁷ sn B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 294-95) shows that the intent of the passage was not to make this month in the spring the New Year – that was in the autumn. Rather, when counting months this was supposed to be remembered first, for it was the great festival of freedom from Egypt. He observes how some scholars have unnecessarily tried to date one New Year earlier than the other.

⁸ tn Heb “and they will take for them a man a lamb.” This is clearly a distributive, or individualizing, use of “man.”

⁹ tn The שֶׂה (*seh*) is a single head from the flock, or smaller cattle, which would include both sheep and goats.

¹⁰ tn Heb “according to the house of their fathers.” The expression “house of the father” is a common expression for a family.

¹¹ sn The Passover was to be a domestic institution. Each lamb was to be shared by family members.

¹² tn Heb “house” (also at the beginning of the following verse).

¹³ sn Later Judaism ruled that “too small” meant fewer than ten (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 88).

¹⁴ tn The clause uses the comparative *min* (מִן) construction: יִקַּח הַבֵּית מִיָּמִית מִיְהוֹת מִיֶּשֶׁה (‘*yim’at habbayit miyhot mished*, “the house is small from being from a lamb,” or “too small for a lamb”). It clearly means that if there were not enough people in the household to have a lamb by themselves, they should join with another family. For the use of the comparative, see GKC 430 §133.c.

¹⁵ tn Heb “he and his neighbor”; the referent (the man) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁶ tn Heb “who is near to his house.”

are to take¹⁶ a lamb according to the number of people – you will make your count for the lamb according to how much each one can eat.¹⁷ **12:5** Your lamb must be¹⁸ perfect,¹⁹ a male, one year old,²⁰ you may take²¹ it from the sheep or from the goats. **12:6** You must care for it²² until the fourteenth day of this month, and then the whole community²³ of Israel will kill it around sundown.²⁴ **12:7** They will take some of the blood and put it on the two side posts and top of the doorframe of the houses where they will

¹⁶ tn The construction uses a perfect tense with a *vav* (ו) consecutive after a conditional clause: “if the household is too small...then he and his neighbor will take.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “[every] man according to his eating.”

¹⁸ sn The reference is normally taken to mean whatever each person could eat. B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 299) suggests, however, that the reference may not be to each individual person’s appetite, but to each family. Each man who is the head of a household was to determine how much his family could eat, and this in turn would determine how many families shared the lamb.

¹⁹ tn The construction has: “[The] lamb...will be to you.” This may be interpreted as a possessive use of the *lamed*, meaning, “[the] lamb...you have” (your lamb) for the Passover. In the context instructing the people to take an animal for this festival, the idea is that the one they select, their animal, must meet these qualifications.

²⁰ tn The Hebrew word תָּמִים (*tamim*) means “perfect” or “whole” or “complete” in the sense of not having blemishes and diseases – no physical defects. The rules for sacrificial animals applied here (see Lev 22:19-21; Deut 17:1).

²¹ tn The idiom says “a son of a year” (בֶּן־שָׁנָה, *ben shanah*), meaning a “yearling” or “one year old” (see GKC 418 §128.v).

²² tn Because a choice is being given in this last clause, the imperfect tense nuance of permission should be used. They must have a perfect animal, but it may be a sheep or a goat. The verb’s object “it” is supplied from the context.

²³ tn The text has לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת (לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת, *l’mishmeret, “and it will be for you for a keeping”).* This noun stresses the activity of watching over or caring for something, probably to keep it in its proper condition for its designated use (see 16:23, 32-34).

²⁴ tn Heb “all the assembly of the community.” This expression is a pleonasm. The verse means that everyone will kill the lamb, i.e., each family unit among the Israelites will kill its animal.

²⁵ tn Heb “between the two evenings” or “between the two settings” (בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים, *ben ha’arbayim*). This expression has had a good deal of discussion. (1) Tg. Onq. says “between the two suns,” which the Talmud explains as the time between the sunset and the time the stars become visible. More technically, the first “evening” would be the time between sunset and the appearance of the crescent moon, and the second “evening” the next hour, or from the appearance of the crescent moon to full darkness (see Deut 16:6 – “at the going down of the sun”). (2) Saadia, Rashi, and Kimchi say the first evening is when the sun begins to decline in the west and cast its shadows, and the second evening is the beginning of night. (3) The view adopted by the Pharisees and the Talmudists (*b. Pesahim* 61a) is that the first evening is when the heat of the sun begins to decrease, and the second evening begins at sunset, or, roughly from 3-5 p.m. The Mishnah (*m. Pesahim* 5:1) indicates the lamb was killed about 2:30 p.m. – anything before noon was not valid. S. R. Driver concludes from this survey that the first view is probably the best, although the last view was the traditionally accepted one (*Exodus*, 89-90). Late afternoon or early evening seems to be intended, the time of twilight perhaps.

eat it. **12:8** They will eat the meat the same night,¹ they will eat it roasted over the fire with bread made without yeast² and with bitter herbs. **12:9** Do not eat it raw³ or boiled in water, but roast it over the fire with its head, its legs, and its entrails. **12:10** You must leave nothing until morning, but you must burn with fire whatever remains of it until morning. **12:11** This is how you are to eat it – dressed to travel,⁴ your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. You are to eat it in haste. It is the LORD’s Passover.⁵

12:12 I will pass through⁶ the land of Egypt in the same⁷ night, and I will attack⁸ all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both of humans and of animals,⁹ and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment.¹⁰ I am the LORD. **12:13** The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, so that when I see¹¹ the blood I will pass

over you,¹² and this plague¹³ will not fall on you to destroy you¹⁴ when I attack¹⁵ the land of Egypt.¹⁶

12:14 This day will become¹⁷ a memorial¹⁸ for you, and you will celebrate it as a festival¹⁹ to the LORD – you will celebrate it perpetually as a lasting ordinance.²⁰ **12:15** For seven days²¹ you

¹ **tn** *Heb* “this night.”

² **sn** Bread made without yeast could be baked quickly, not requiring time for the use of a leavening ingredient to make the dough rise. In Deut 16:3 the unleavened cakes are called “the bread of affliction,” which alludes to the alarm and haste of the Israelites. In later Judaism and in the writings of Paul, leaven came to be a symbol of evil or corruption, and so “unleavened bread” – bread made without yeast – was interpreted to be a picture of purity or freedom from corruption or defilement (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 90-91).

³ **sn** This ruling was to prevent their eating it just softened by the fire or partially roasted as differing customs might prescribe or allow.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “your loins girded.”

⁵ **tn** The meaning of פסח (*pesakh*) is debated. (1) Some have tried to connect it to the Hebrew verb with the same radicals that means “to halt, leap, limp, stumble.” See 1 Kgs 18:26 where the word describes the priests of Baal hopping around the altar; also the crippled child in 2 Sam 4:4. (2) Others connect it to the Akkadian *passahu*, which means “to appease, make soft, placate”; or (3) an Egyptian word to commemorate the harvest (see J. B. Segal, *The Hebrew Passover*, 95-100). The verb occurs in Isa 31:5 with the connotation of “to protect”; B. S. Childs suggests that this was already influenced by the exodus tradition (*Exodus* [OTL], 183, n. 11). Whatever links there may or may not have been that show an etymology, in Exod 12 it is describing Yahweh’s passing over or through.

⁶ **tn** The verb וַיַּעֲבֹד (*v^e’avari*) is a Qal perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive, announcing the future action of God in bringing judgment on the land. The word means “pass over, across, through.” This verb provides a contextual motive for the name “Passover.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “this night.”

⁸ **tn** The verb נָכַח (*nakhah*) means “to strike, smite, attack”; it does not always mean “to kill,” but that is obviously its outcome in this context. This is also its use in 2:12, describing how Moses killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “from man and to beast.”

¹⁰ **tn** The phrase אֶעֱשֶׂה שְׂפָתַי (‘*e’eseh sh^efatim*) is “I will do judgments.” The statement clearly includes what had begun in Exod 6:1. But the statement that God would judge the gods of Egypt is appropriately introduced here (see also Num 33:4) because with the judgment on Pharaoh and the deliverance from bondage, Yahweh would truly show himself to be the one true God. Thus, “I am Yahweh” is fitting here (see B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 312).

¹¹ **tn** Both of the verbs for seeing and passing over are perfect tenses with *vav* (ו) consecutives: וַיִּרְאוּ...וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ (*v^a’ra’iti... ufasakhti*); the first of these parallel verb forms is subordinated to the second as a temporal clause. See Gesenius’s description of perfect consecutives in the protasis and apodosis (GKC 494 §159.g).

¹² **tn** The meaning of the verb is supplied in part from the near context of seeing the sign and omitting to destroy, as well as the verb at the start of verse 12 “pass through, by, over.” Isa 31:5 says, “Just as birds hover over a nest, so the LORD who commands armies will protect Jerusalem. He will protect and deliver it; as he passes over he will rescue it.” The word does not occur enough times to enable one to delineate a clear meaning. It is probably not the same word as “to limp” found in 1 Kgs 18:21, 26, unless there is a highly developed category of meaning there.

¹³ **tn** The word “plague” (נֶגֶף, *negef*) is literally “a blow” or “a striking.” It usually describes a calamity or affliction given to those who have aroused God’s anger, as in Exod 30:12; Num 8:19; 16:46, 47; Josh 22:17 (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 92-93).

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “for destruction.” The form מַשְׁחִית (mashkhit) is the Hiphil participle of שָׁחַת (*shakhat*). The word itself is a harsh term; it was used to describe Yahweh’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 13:10).

¹⁵ **tn** וַיַּעֲבֹד (*b^e’hakkoi*) is the Hiphil infinitive construct from נָכַח (*nakhah*), with a preposition prefixed and a pronominal suffix added to serve as the subjective genitive – the subject of this temporal clause. It is also used in 12:12.

¹⁶ **sn** For additional discussions, see W. H. Elder, “The Passover,” *RevExp* 74 (1977): 511-22; E. Nutz, “The Passover,” *BV* 12 (1978): 23-28; H. M. Kamsler, “The Blood Covenant in the Bible,” *Dor le Dor* 6 (1977): 94-98; A. Rodriguez, *Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus*; B. Ramm, “The Theology of the Book of Exodus: A Reflection on Exodus 12:12,” *SwJT* 20 (1977): 59-68; and M. Gilula, “The Smiting of the First-Born: An Egyptian Myth?” *TA* 4 (1977): 94-85.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and this day will be.”

¹⁸ **tn** The expression “will be for a memorial” means “will become a memorial.”

sn The instruction for the unleavened bread (vv. 14-20) begins with the introduction of the memorial (זִכָּרוֹן [zikkaron] from זָכַר [zakhar]). The reference is to the fifteenth day of the month, the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 315) notes that it refers to the death blow on Egypt, but as a remembrance had to be held on the next day, not during the night. He also notes that this was the origin of “the Day of the LORD” (“the Day of Yahweh”), which the prophets predicted as the day of the divine battle. On it the enemy would be wiped out. For further information, see B. S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (SBT). The point of the word “remember” in Hebrew is not simply a recollection of an event, but a reliving of it, a reactivating of its significance. In covenant rituals “remembrance” or “memorial” is designed to prompt God and worshiper alike to act in accordance with the covenant. Jesus brought the motif forward to the new covenant with “this do in remembrance of me.”

¹⁹ **tn** The verb וַיִּזְכֹּר (*v^a’khaggotem*), a perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) consecutive to continue the instruction, is followed by the cognate accusative תִּזְכֹּר (*khag*), for emphasis. As the wording implies and the later legislation required, this would involve a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Yahweh.

²⁰ **tn** Two expressions show that this celebration was to be kept perpetually: the line has “for your generations, [as] a statute forever.” “Generations” means successive generations (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 94). עוֹלָם (*’olam*) means “ever, forever, perpetual” – no end in sight.

²¹ **tn** This expression is an adverbial accusative of time. The feast was to last from the 15th to the 21st of the month.

must eat¹ bread made without yeast.² Surely³ on the first day you must put away yeast from your houses because anyone who eats bread made with yeast⁴ from the first day to the seventh day will be cut off⁵ from Israel.

12:16 On the first day there will be a holy convocation,⁶ and on the seventh day there will be a holy convocation for you. You must do no work of any kind⁷ on them, only what every person will eat – that alone may be prepared for you. **12:17** So you will keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because on this very⁸ day I brought your regiments⁹ out from the land of Egypt, and so you must keep this day perpetually as a last-

ing ordinance.¹⁰ **12:18** In the first month,¹¹ from the fourteenth day of the month, in the evening, you will eat bread made without yeast until the twenty-first day of the month in the evening. **12:19** For seven days¹² yeast must not be found in your houses, for whoever eats what is made with yeast – that person¹³ will be cut off from the community of Israel, whether a foreigner¹⁴ or one born in the land. **12:20** You will not eat anything made with yeast; in all the places where you live you must eat bread made without yeast.¹⁵

12:21 Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel, and told them, “Go and select¹⁶ for yourselves a lamb or young goat¹⁶ for your families, and kill the Passover animals.¹⁷ **12:22** Take a branch of hyssop,¹⁸ dip it in the blood that is in the basin,¹⁹ and apply to the top of the doorframe and the two side posts some of the blood that is in the basin. Not one of you is to go out²⁰ the door of his house until morning. **12:23** For the LORD will pass through to strike Egypt, and when he sees²¹ the blood on the top of the doorframe and the two side posts, then the LORD will pass over the door, and he will not permit the destroyer²² to enter your houses to strike you.²³ **12:24** You must observe this event as an ordi-

¹ **tn** Or “you will eat.” The statement stresses their obligation – they must eat unleavened bread and avoid all leaven.

² **tn** The etymology of מצות (*matsot*, “unleavened bread,” i.e., “bread made without yeast”) is uncertain. Suggested connections to known verbs include “to squeeze, press,” “to depart, go out,” “to ransom,” or to an Egyptian word “food, cake, evening meal.” For a more detailed study of “unleavened bread” and related matters such as “yeast” or “leaven,” see A. P. Ross, *NIDOTTE* 4:448-53.

³ **tn** The participle serves to emphasize, not restrict here (B. S. Childs, *Exodus* [OTL], 183, n. 15).

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “every eater of leavened bread.” The participial phrase stands at the beginning of the clause as a *casus pendens*, that is, it stands grammatically separate from the sentence. It names a condition, the contingent occurrences of which involve a further consequence (GKC 361 §116.w).

⁵ **tn** The verb נִכְרַתָּה (*v^hnikhru^tah*) is the Niphal perfect with the *vav* (h) consecutive; it is a common formula in the Law for divine punishment. Here, in sequence to the idea that someone might eat bread made with yeast, the result would be that “that soul [the verb is feminine] will be cut off.” The verb is the equivalent of the imperfect tense due to the consecutive; a translation with a nuance of the imperfect of possibility (“may be cut off”) fits better perhaps than a specific future. There is the real danger of being cut off, for while the punishment might include excommunication from the community, the greater danger was in the possibility of divine intervention to root out the evildoer (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 94). Gesenius lists this as the use of a perfect with a *vav* consecutive after a participle (a *casus pendens*) to introduce the apodosis (GKC 337 §112.mm).

sn In Lev 20:3, 5-6, God speaks of himself as cutting off a person from among the Israelites. The rabbis mentioned premature death and childlessness as possible judgments in such cases, and N. M. Sarna comments that “one who deliberately excludes himself from the religious community of Israel cannot be a beneficiary of the covenantal blessings” (*Exodus* [JPSTC], 58).

⁶ **sn** This refers to an assembly of the people at the sanctuary for religious purposes. The word “convocation” implies that the people were called together, and Num 10:2 indicates they were called together by trumpets.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “all/every work will not be done.” The word refers primarily to the work of one’s occupation. B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 322) explains that since this comes prior to the fuller description of laws for Sabbaths and festivals, the passage simply restricts all work except for the preparation of food. Once the laws are added, this qualification is no longer needed. Gesenius translates this as “no manner of work shall be done” (GKC 478-79 §152.b).

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “on the bone of this day.” The expression means “the substance of the day,” the day itself, the very day (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 95).

⁹ **tn** The word is “armies” or “divisions” (see Exod 6:26 and the note there; cf. also 7:4). The narrative will continue to portray Israel as a mighty army, marching forth in its divisions.

¹⁰ **tn** See Exod 12:14.

¹¹ **tn** “month” has been supplied.

¹² **tn** “Seven days” is an adverbial accusative of time (see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 12, §56).

¹³ **tn** The term is נֶפֶשׁ (*nefesh*), often translated “soul.” It refers to the whole person, the soul within the body. The noun is feminine, agreeing with the feminine verb “be cut off.”

¹⁴ **tn** Or “alien”; or “stranger.”

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “draw out and take.” The verb has in view the need “to draw out” a lamb or goat selected from among the rest of the flock.

¹⁶ **tn** The Hebrew noun is singular and can refer to either a lamb or a goat. Since English has no common word for both, the phrase “a lamb or young goat” is used in the translation.

¹⁷ **tn** The word “animals” is added to avoid giving the impression in English that the Passover festival itself is the object of “kill.”

¹⁸ **sn** The hyssop is a small bush that grows throughout the Sinai, probably the aromatic herb *Origanum Maru* L., or *Origanum Aegyptiacum*. The plant also grew out of the walls in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 4:33). See L. Baldensperger and G. M. Crowfoot, “Hyssop,” *PEQ* 63 (1931): 89-98. A piece of hyssop was also useful to the priests because it worked well for sprinkling.

¹⁹ **tn** The Greek and the Vulgate translate סַף (*saf*, “basin”) as “threshold.” W. C. Kaiser reports how early traditions grew up about the killing of the lamb on the threshold (“Exodus,” *EBZ* 2:376).

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and you, you shall not go out, a man from the door of his house.” This construction puts stress on prohibiting absolutely everyone from going out.

²¹ **tn** The first of the two clauses begun with perfects and *vav* consecutives may be subordinated to form a temporal clause: “and he will see...and he will pass over,” becomes “when he sees...he will pass over.”

²² **tn** Here the form is the Hiphil participle with the definite article. Gesenius says this is now to be explained as “the destroyer” although some take it to mean “destruction” (GKC 406 §126.m, n. 1).

²³ **tn** “you” has been supplied.

nance for you and for your children forever. **12:25** When you enter the land that the LORD will give to you, just as he said, you must observe⁴ this ceremony. **12:26** When your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’² – **12:27** then you will say, ‘It is the sacrifice³ of the LORD’s Passover, when he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck⁴ Egypt and delivered our households.’” The people bowed down low⁵ to the ground, **12:28** and the Israelites went away and did exactly as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron.⁶

The Deliverance from Egypt

12:29⁷ It happened⁸ at midnight – the LORD attacked all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the prison, and all the firstborn of the cattle. **12:30** Pharaoh got up⁹ in the night,¹⁰ along with

all his servants and all Egypt, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no house¹¹ in which there was not someone dead. **12:31** Pharaoh¹² summoned Moses and Aaron in the night and said, “Get up, get out¹³ from among my people, both you and the Israelites! Go, serve the LORD as you have requested!¹⁴ **12:32** Also, take your flocks and your herds, just as you have requested, and leave. But bless me also.”¹⁵

12:33 The Egyptians were urging¹⁶ the people on, in order to send them out of the land quickly,¹⁷ for they were saying, “We are all dead!” **12:34** So the people took their dough before the yeast was added,¹⁸ with their kneading troughs bound up in their clothing on their shoulders. **12:35** Now the Israelites had done¹⁹ as Moses told them – they had requested from the Egyptians²⁰ silver and gold items and clothing.

¹ tn The verb used here and at the beginning of v. 24 is שָׁמַר (*shamar*); it can be translated “watch, keep, protect,” but in this context the point is to “observe” the religious customs and practices set forth in these instructions.

² tn Heb “what is this service to you?”

³ sn This expression “the sacrifice of Yahweh’s Passover” occurs only here. The word זָבַח (*zevakh*) means “slaughtering” and so a blood sacrifice. The fact that this word is used in Lev 3 for the peace offering has linked the Passover as a kind of peace offering, and both the Passover and the peace offerings were eaten as communal meals.

⁴ tn The verb means “to strike, smite, plague”; it is the same verb that has been used throughout this section (נָגַף, *nagaf*). Here the construction is the infinitive construct in a temporal clause.

⁵ tn The two verbs form a verbal hendiadys: “and the people bowed down and they worshiped.” The words are synonymous, and so one is taken as the adverb for the other.

⁶ tn Heb “went away and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.” The final phrase “so they did,” which is somewhat redundant in English, has been represented in the translation by the adverb “exactly.”

⁷ sn The next section records the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and so becomes the turning point of the book. Verses 28 and 29 could be included in the exposition of the previous section as the culmination of that part. The message might highlight God’s requirement for deliverance from bondage through the application of the blood of the sacrifice, God’s instruction for the memorial of deliverance through the purging of corruption, and the compliance of those who believed the message. But these verses also form the beginning of this next section (and so could be used functionally). This unit includes the judgment on Egypt (29-30), the exodus from Egypt (31-39) and the historical summation and report (40-42).

⁸ tn The verse begins with the temporal indicator וַיָּהִי (*vay’hi*), often translated “and it came to pass.” Here it could be left untranslated: “In the middle of the night Yahweh attacked.” The word order of the next and main clause furthers the emphasis by means of the *vav* disjunctive on the divine name preceding the verb. The combination of these initial and disjunctive elements helps to convey the suddenness of the attack, while its thoroughness is stressed by the repetition of “firstborn” in the rest of the verse, the merism (“from the firstborn of Pharaoh...to the firstborn of the captive”), and the mention of cattle.

⁹ tn Heb “arose,” the verb קָם (*qum*) in this context certainly must describe a less ceremonial act. The entire country woke up in terror because of the deaths.

¹⁰ tn The noun is an adverbial accusative of time – “in the night” or “at night.”

¹¹ sn Or so it seemed. One need not push this description to complete literalness. The reference would be limited to houses that actually had firstborn people or animals. In a society in which households might include more than one generation of humans and animals, however, the presence of a firstborn human or animal would be the rule rather than the exception.

¹² tn Heb “he”; the referent (Pharaoh) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹³ tn The urgency in Pharaoh’s words is caught by the abrupt use of the imperatives – “get up, go” (קָמוּ וָצֵאוּ, *qumu ts’u*), and “go, serve” (וָלְכוּ עֲבֹדוּ, *ul’khu ivdu*) and “take” and “leave/go” (וְלָכוּ...וַאֲלֶכְהוּ, *q’khu...valekhu*).

¹⁴ tn Heb “as you have said.” The same phrase also occurs in the following verse.

sn It appears from this clause that Pharaoh has given up attempting to impose restrictions as he had earlier. With the severe judgment on him for his previous refusals he should now know that these people are no longer his subjects, and he is no longer sovereign. As Moses had insisted, all the Israelites would leave, and with all their possessions, to worship Yahweh.

¹⁵ tn The form is the Piel perfect with a *vav* (ו) consecutive (וַיִּבְרַחְתֶּם, *uverakhtem*); coming in the sequence of imperatives this perfect tense would be volitional – probably a request rather than a command.

sn Pharaoh probably meant that they should bless him also when they were sacrificing to Yahweh in their religious festival – after all, he might reason, he did let them go (after divine judgment). To bless him would mean to invoke good gifts from God for him.

¹⁶ tn The verb used here (חָזַק, *khazaq*) is the same verb used for Pharaoh’s heart being hardened. It conveys the idea of their being resolved or insistent in this – they were not going to change.

¹⁷ tn The phrase uses two construct infinitives in a hendiadys, the first infinitive becoming the modifier.

¹⁸ tn The imperfect tense after the adverb טָרַם (*terem*) is to be treated as a preterite: “before it was leavened,” or “before the yeast was added.” See GKC 314-15 §107.c.

¹⁹ tn The verbs “had done” and then “had asked” were accomplished prior to the present narrative (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 99). The verse begins with disjunctive word order to introduce the reminder of earlier background information.

²⁰ tn Heb “from Egypt.” Here the Hebrew text uses the name of the country to represent the inhabitants (a figure known as metonymy).

12:36 The LORD¹ gave the people favor² in the sight of the Egyptians, and they gave them whatever they wanted,³ and so they plundered Egypt.⁴

12:37 The Israelites journeyed⁵ from Rameses⁶ to Sukkoth. There were about 600,000 men⁷ on foot, plus their dependants.⁸ 12:38 A mixed multitude⁹

¹ **tn** The holy name (“Yahweh,” represented as “the LORD” in the translation) has the *vav* disjunctive with it. It may have the force: “Now it was Yahweh who gave the people favor....”

² **sn** God was destroying the tyrant and his nobles and the land’s economy because of their stubborn refusal. But God established friendly, peaceful relations between his people and the Egyptians. The phrase is used outside Exod only in Gen 39:21, referring to Joseph.

³ **tn** The verb *וַיִּשְׁאֲלוּ* (*vayyash’ulum*) is a Hiphil form that has the root *שאל* (*sha’al*), used earlier in Qal with the meaning “requested” (12:35). The verb here is frequently translated “and they lent them,” but lending does not fit the point. What they gave the Israelites were farewell gifts sought by demanding or asking for them. This may exemplify a “permissive” use of the Hiphil stem, in which “the Hiphil designates an action that is agreeable to the object and allowed by the subject” (B. T. Arnold and J. H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 52).

⁴ **sn** See B. Jacob, “The Gifts of the Egyptians; A Critical Commentary,” *Journal of Reformed Judaism* 27 (1980): 59-69.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and the sons of Israel journeyed.”

⁶ **sn** The wilderness itinerary begins here. W. C. Kaiser records the identification of these two places as follows: The name *Rameses* probably refers to Qantir rather than Tanis, which is more remote, because Qantir was by the water; *Sukkoth* is identified as Tell el Maskhuta in the Wadi Tumilat near modern Ismailia – or the region around the city (“Exodus,” *EBC* 2:379). Of the extensive bibliography, see G. W. Coats, “The Wilderness Itinerary,” *CBQ* 34 (1972): 135-52; G. I. Davies, “The Wilderness Itineraries: A Comparative Study,” *Tyn-Bul* 25 (1974): 46-81; and J. T. Walsh, “From Egypt to Moab. A Source Critical Analysis of the Wilderness Itinerary,” *CBQ* 39 (1977): 20-33.

⁷ **tn** The word for “men” (*הַגְּבֻרִים*, *hagg’varim*) stresses their hardness and capability – strong men, potential soldiers – in contrast with the word that follows and designates noncombatants.

sn There have been many attempts to calculate the population of the exodus group, but nothing in the text gives the exact number other than the 600,000 people on foot who were men. Estimates of two million people are very large, especially since the Bible says there were seven nations in the land of Canaan mightier than Israel. It is probably not two million people (note, the Bible never said it was – this is calculated by scholars). But attempts to reduce the number by redefining the word “thousand” to mean clan or tribe or family unit have not been convincing, primarily because of all the tabulations of the tribes in the different books of the Bible that have to be likewise reduced. B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 347) rejects the many arguments and calculations as the work of eighteenth century deists and rationalists, arguing that the numbers were taken seriously in the text. Some writers interpret the numbers as inflated due to a rhetorical use of numbers, arriving at a number of 60,000 or so for the men here listed (reducing it by a factor of ten), and insisting this is a literal interpretation of the text as opposed to a spiritual or allegorical approach (see R. Allen, “Numbers,” *EBC* 2:686-96; see also G. Mendenhall, “The Census Lists of Numbers 1 and 26,” *JBL* 77 [1958]: 52-66). This proposal removes the “embarrassingly” large number for the exodus, but like other suggestions, lacks completely compelling evidence. For a more extensive discussion of the large numbers used to describe the Israelites in their wilderness experience, see the note on “46,500” in Num 1:21.

⁸ **tn** For more on this word see 10:10 and 24.

⁹ **tn** The “mixed multitude” (*עַרְבֵי רַבִּי*, *’erev rav*) refers to a great “swarm” (see a possible cognate in 8:21[17]) of folk who joined the Israelites, people who were impressed by the defeat of

also went up with them, and flocks and herds – a very large number of cattle.¹⁰ 12:39 They baked cakes of bread without yeast using the dough they had brought from Egypt, for it was made without yeast – because they were thrust out¹¹ of Egypt and were not able to delay, they¹² could not prepare¹³ food for themselves either.

12:40 Now the length of time the Israelites lived in Egypt was 430 years.¹⁴ 12:41 At the end of the 430 years, on the very day, all the regiments¹⁵ of the LORD went out of the land of Egypt. 12:42 It was a night of vigil for the LORD to bring them out from the land of Egypt,¹⁶ and so¹⁷ on this night all Israel is to keep the vigil¹⁸ to the LORD for generations to come.

Participation in the Passover

12:43¹⁹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “This is the ordinance of the Passover. No

Egypt, who came to faith, or who just wanted to escape Egypt (maybe slaves or descendants of the Hyksos). The expression prepares for later references to riffraff who came along.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and very much cattle.”

¹¹ **sn** For the use of this word in developing the motif, see Exod 2:17, 22; 6:1; and 11:1.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “and also.”

¹³ **tn** The verb is *עָשׂוּ* (*’asu*, “they made”); here, with a potential nuance, it is rendered “they could [not] prepare.”

¹⁴ **sn** Here as well some scholars work with the number 430 to try to reduce the stay in Egypt for the bondage. Some argue that if the number included the time in Canaan, that would reduce the bondage by half. S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 102) notes that P thought Moses was the fourth generation from Jacob (6:16-27), if those genealogies are not selective. Exodus 6 has Levi – Kohath – Amram – Moses. This would require a period of about 100 years, and that is unusual. There is evidence, however, that the list is selective. In 1 Chr 2:3-20 the text has Bezelel (see Exod 31:2-5) a contemporary of Moses and yet the seventh from Judah. Elishama, a leader of the Ephraimites (Num 10:22), was in the ninth generation from Jacob (1 Chr 7:22-26). Joshua, Moses’ assistant, was the eleventh from Jacob (1 Chr 7:27). So the “four generations” leading up to Moses are not necessarily complete. With regard to Exod 6, K. A. Kitchen has argued that the four names do not indicate successive generations, but tribe (Levi), clan (Kohath), family (Amram), and individual (Moses); K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 54-55). For a detailed discussion of the length of the sojourn, see E. H. Merrill, *A Kingdom of Priests*, 75-79.

¹⁵ **sn** This military term is used elsewhere in Exodus (e.g., 6:26; 7:4; 12:17, 50), but here the Israelites are called “the regiments of the LORD.”

¹⁶ **tn** There is some ambiguity in *לֵיל שְׁמִרַתְּמוֹת הָאֲדוֹנָי* (*lel shim-murim hu’ la’adonay* [ayhveh]). It is likely that this first clause means that Yahweh was on watch for Israel to bring them out, as the next clause says. He was protecting his people (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 102). Then, the night of vigil will be transferred to Israel, who now must keep it “to” him.

¹⁷ **tn** “and so” has been supplied.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “this night is for Yahweh a vigil for all Israelites for their generations.”

¹⁹ **sn** The section that concludes the chapter contains regulations pertaining to the Passover. The section begins at v. 43, but vv. 40-42 form a good setting for it. In this unit vv. 43-45 belong together because they stress that a stranger and foreigner cannot eat. Verse 46 stands by itself, ruling that the meal must be eaten at home. Verse 47 instructs that the whole nation was to eat it. Verses 48-49 make provision for foreigners who may wish to participate. And vv. 50-51 record the obedience of Israel.

foreigner may¹ share in eating it.² **12:44** But everyone's servant who is bought for money, after you have circumcised him, may eat it. **12:45** A foreigner and a hired worker must not eat it. **12:46** It must be eaten in one house; you must not bring any of the meat outside the house, and you must not break a bone of it. **12:47** The whole community of Israel must observe it.

12:48 "When a foreigner lives³ with you and wants to observe the Passover to the LORD, all his males must be circumcised,⁴ and then he may approach and observe it, and he will be like one who is born in the land⁵ – but no uncircumcised person may eat of it. **12:49** The same law will apply⁶ to the person who is native-born and to the foreigner who lives among you."

12:50 So all the Israelites did exactly as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron.⁷ **12:51** And on this very day the LORD brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt by their regiments.

The Law of the Firstborn

13:1⁸ The LORD spoke⁹ to Moses: **13:2** "Set apart¹⁰ to me every firstborn male – the first

¹ **tn** This is taken in the modal nuance of permission, reading that no foreigner is permitted to share in it (apart from being a member of the household as a circumcised slave [v. 44] or obeying v. 48, if a free individual).

² **tn** This is the partitive use of the *bet* (ב) preposition, expressing that the action extends to something and includes the idea of participation in it (GKC 380 §119.m).

³ **tn** Both the participle "foreigner" and the verb "lives" are from the verb גור (*gur*), which means "to sojourn, to dwell as an alien." This reference is to a foreigner who settles in the land. He is the protected foreigner; when he comes to another area where he does not have his clan to protect him, he must come under the protection of the Law, or the people. If the "resident foreigner" is circumcised, he may participate in the Passover (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 104).

⁴ **tn** The infinitive absolute functions as the finite verb here, and "every male" could be either the object or the subject (see GKC 347 §113.gg and 387 §121.a).

⁵ **tn** אֲזֵרָה (*'ezrahk*) refers to the native-born individual, the native Israelite as opposed to the "stranger, alien" (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 104); see also W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, 127, 210.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* "one law will be to."

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did." The final phrase "so they did," which is somewhat redundant in English, has been represented in the translation by the adverb "exactly."

⁸ **sn** This next section seems a little confusing at first glance: vv. 1 and 2 call for the dedication of the firstborn, then vv. 3-10 instruct concerning the ritual of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and then vv. 11-16 return to the firstborn. B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 360) explains that vv. 3-16 contain a sermon, in which Moses "began his speech by reminding the people of the events which had just occurred and how they would be recalled by them in the future," and then he explained the rulings that went along with it. So the first two verses state the core of the sermon, a new command calling for the redeemed (firstborn) to be sanctified. The second portion stresses that God requires the redeemed to remember their redemption by purifying themselves (3-10). The third section (11-16) develops the theme of dedication to Yahweh. The point is that in view of God's mighty redemption, the redeemed (represented by the firstborn) must be set apart for Yahweh's service.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* "and Yahweh spoke."

¹⁰ **tn** The verb "sanctify" is the Piel imperative of קָדַשׁ (*qadash*). In the Qal stem it means "be holy, be set apart, be dis-

offspring of every womb¹¹ among the Israelites, whether human or animal; it is mine."¹²

13:3 Moses said to the people, "Remember¹³ this day on which you came out from Egypt, from the place where you were enslaved,¹⁴ for the LORD brought you out of there¹⁵ with a mighty hand – and no bread made with yeast may be eaten.¹⁶ **13:4** On this day,¹⁷ in the month of Abib,¹⁸ you are going out.¹⁹

13:5 When²⁰ the LORD brings you to the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, and Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey,²¹ then you will keep²² this ceremony²³ in this

tinct," and in this stem "sanctify, set apart."

sn Here is the central principle of the chapter – the firstborn were sacred to God and must be "set apart" (the meaning of the verb "sanctify") for his use.

¹¹ **tn** The word פֶּתֶר (*petter*) means "that which opens"; this construction literally says, "that which opens every womb," which means "the first offspring of every womb." Verses 12 and 15 further indicate male offspring.

¹² **tn** *Heb* "to me it." The preposition here expresses possession; the construction is simply "it [is, belongs] to me."

¹³ **tn** The form is the infinitive absolute of זָכַר (*zakhar*, "remember"). The use of this form in place of the imperative (also found in the Decalogue with the Sabbath instruction) stresses the basic meaning of the root word, everything involved with remembering (emphatic imperative, according to GKC 346 §113.bb). The verb usually implies that there will be proper action based on what was remembered.

sn There is a pattern in the arrangement of vv. 3-10 and 11-16. Both sections contain commands based on the mighty deliverance as reminders of the deliverance. "With a mighty hand" occurs in vv. 3, 9, 14, 16. An explanation to the son is found in vv. 8 and 14. The emphases "sign on your hand" and "between your eyes" are part of the conclusions to both halves (vv. 9, 16).

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "from a house of slaves." "House" is obviously not meant to be literal; it indicates a location characterized by slavery, a land of slaves, as if they were in a slave house. Egypt is also called an "iron-smelting furnace" (Deut 4:20).

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "from this" [place].

¹⁶ **tn** The verb is a Niphal imperfect; it could be rendered "must not be eaten" in the nuance of the instruction or injunction category, but permission fits this sermon presentation very well – nothing with yeast may be eaten.

¹⁷ **tn** The word הַיּוֹם (*hayyom*) means literally "the day, today, this day." In this sentence it functions as an adverbial accusative explaining when the event took place.

¹⁸ **sn** *Abib* appears to be an old name for the month, meaning something like "[month of] fresh young ears" (Lev 2:14 [*Heb*]) (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 106). B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 364) explains that these names were not precise designations, but general seasons based on the lunar year in the agricultural setting.

¹⁹ **tn** The form is the active participle, functioning verbally.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* "and it will be when."

²¹ **tn** See notes on Exod 3:8.

²² **tn** The verb is יִבְרַח (*'avada*), the Qal perfect with a *vav* (ו) consecutive. It is the equivalent of the imperfect tense of instruction or injunction; it forms the main point after the temporal clause – "when Yahweh brings you out...then you will serve."

²³ **tn** The object is a cognate accusative for emphasis on the meaning of the service – "you will serve this service." W. C. Kaiser notes how this noun was translated "slavery" and "work" in the book, but "service" or "ceremony" for Yahweh. Israel was saved from slavery to Egypt into service for God as remembered by this ceremony ("Exodus," *EBC* 2:383).

month. **13:6** For seven days¹ you must eat² bread made without yeast, and on the seventh day there is to be³ a festival to the LORD. **13:7** Bread made without yeast must be eaten⁴ for seven days;⁵ no bread made with yeast shall be seen⁶ among you, and you must have no yeast among you within any of your borders.

13:8 You are to tell your son⁷ on that day,⁸ 'It is⁹ because of what¹⁰ the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' **13:9-11** It¹² will be a sign¹³ for you on your hand and a memorial¹⁴ on your forehead,¹⁵ so that the law of the LORD may be¹⁶ in your mouth,¹⁷ for¹⁸ with a mighty hand the LORD

brought you out of Egypt. **13:10** So you must keep¹⁹ this ordinance at its appointed time from year to year.²⁰

13:11 When the LORD brings you²¹ into the land of the Canaanites,²² as he swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it²³ to you, **13:12** then you must give over²⁴ to the LORD the first offspring of every womb.²⁵ Every firstling²⁶ of a beast that you have²⁷ – the males will be the LORD's.²⁸ **13:13** Every firstling²⁹ of a donkey you must redeem³⁰ with a lamb, and if you do not redeem it, then you must break its neck.³¹

1 tn Heb "Seven days."

2 tn The imperfect tense functions with the nuance of instruction or injunction. It could also be given an obligatory nuance: "you must eat" or "you are to eat." Some versions have simply made it an imperative.

3 tn The phrase "there is to be" has been supplied.

4 tn The imperfect has the nuance of instruction or injunction again, but it could also be given an obligatory nuance.

5 tn The construction is an adverbial accusative of time, answering how long the routine should be followed (see GKC 374 §118.k).

6 tn Or "visible to you" (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 366).

7 tn The form is the Hiphil perfect with the *vav* (ו) consecutive, carrying the sequence forward: "and you will declare to your son."

8 sn A very important part of the teaching here is the manner in which the memory of the deliverance will be retained in Israel – they were to teach their children the reasons for the feast, as a binding law forever. This will remind the nation of its duties to Yahweh in gratitude for the great deliverance.

9 tn Heb "day, saying." "Tell...saying" is redundant, so "saying" has not been included in the translation here.

10 tn "it is" has been supplied.

11 tn The text uses הוּ (zeh), which Gesenius classifies as the use of the pronoun to introduce a relative clause after the preposition (GKC 447 §138.h) – but he thinks the form is corrupt. B. S. Childs, however, sees no reason to posit a corruption in this form (*Exodus* [OTL], 184).

12 sn This passage has, of course, been taken literally by many devout Jews, and portions of the text have been encased in phylacteries and bound on the arm and forehead. B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 368), weighing the pros and cons of the literal or the figurative meaning, says that those who took it literally should not be looked down on for their symbolic work. In many cases, he continues, it is the spirit that kills and the letter makes alive – because people who argue against a literal usage do so to excuse lack of action. This is a rather interesting twist in the discussion. The point of the teaching was obviously meant to keep the Law of Yahweh in the minds of the people, to remind them of their duties.

13 tn That is, this ceremony.

14 tn Heb "for a sign."

15 tn Heb "for a memorial."

16 tn Heb "between your eyes" (KJV and ASV both similar); the same expression occurs in v. 16.

17 sn That these festivals and consecrations were to be signs and memorials is akin to the expressions used in the book of Proverbs (Prov 3:3, "bind them around your neck...write them on your heart"). The people were to use the festivals as outward and visible tokens to remind them to obey what the Law required.

18 tn The purpose of using this ceremony as a sign and a memorial is that the Law might be in their mouth. The imperfect tense, then, receives the classification of final imperfect in the purpose clause.

19 sn "Mouth" is a metonymy of cause; the point is that they should be ever talking about the Law as their guide as they go about their duties (see Deut 6:7; 11:19; Josh 1:8).

20 tn This causal clause gives the reason for what has just

been instructed. Because Yahweh delivered them from bondage, he has the strongest claims on their life.

19 tn The form is a perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) consecutive, functioning as the equivalent of an imperfect of instruction or injunction.

20 tn Or "every year," or "year after year."

21 tn Heb "and it will be when Yahweh brings (will bring) you."

22 sn The name "the Canaanite" (and so collective for "Canaanites") is occasionally used to summarize all the list of Canaanitish tribes that lived in the land.

23 tn The verb ונתתה (un'tanah) is the Qal perfect with the *vav* (ו) consecutive; this is in sequence to the preceding verb, and forms part of the protasis, the temporal clause. The main clause is the instruction in the next verse.

24 tn The unusual choice of words in this passage reflects the connection with the deliverance of the firstborn in the exodus when the Lord passed over the Israelites (12:12, 23). Here the Law said, "you will cause to pass over (והעברתה) *v^havarta* to Yahweh." The Hiphil perfect with the *vav* (ו) provides the main clause after the temporal clauses. Yahweh here claimed the firstborn as his own. The remarkable thing about this is that Yahweh did not keep the firstborn that was dedicated to him, but allowed the child to be redeemed by his father. It was an acknowledgment that the life of the child belonged to God as the one redeemed from death, and that the child represented the family. Thus, the observance referred to the dedication of all the redeemed to God.

25 sn It was once assumed by some scholars that child sacrifice lay behind this text in the earlier days, but that the priests and prophets removed those themes. Apart from the fact that there is absolutely no evidence for anything like that, the Law forbade child sacrifice, and always used child sacrifice as the sample of what not to do in conformity with the pagans (e.g., Deut 12:31). Besides, how absurd would it be for Yahweh to redeem the firstborn from death and then ask Israel to kill them. See further B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 371.

26 tn Heb "every opener of a womb," that is, the firstborn from every womb.

27 tn The descriptive noun שְׁגֵר (sheger) is related to the verb "drop, cast"; it refers to a newly born animal that is dropped or cast from the womb. The expression then reads, "and all that first open [the womb], the casting of a beast."

28 tn Heb "that is to you." The preposition expresses possession.

29 tn The Hebrew text simply has "the males to Yahweh." It indicates that the LORD must have them, or they belong to the LORD.

30 tn Heb "and every opener [of a womb]."

31 tn The verb תפדה (tifdeh), the instructional imperfect, refers to the idea of redemption by paying a cost. This word is used regularly of redeeming a person, or an animal, from death or servitude (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 109).

31 tn The conditional clause uses an imperfect tense; this is followed by a perfect tense with the *vav* consecutive providing the obligation or instruction. The owner might not redeem the donkey, but if he did not, he could not keep it, he had to kill it by breaking its neck (so either a lamb for it, or the donkey itself). The donkey could not be killed by shedding blood because that would make it a sacrifice, and that was not possible with this kind of animal. See G. Brin, "The Firstling of

Every firstborn of¹ your sons you must redeem.

13:14² In the future,³ when your son asks you⁴ ‘What is this?’⁵ you are to tell him, ‘With a mighty hand⁶ the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the land of slavery.’⁷ **13:15** When Pharaoh stubbornly refused⁸ to release us, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of people to the firstborn of animals.⁹ That is why I am sacrificing¹⁰ to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb, but all my firstborn sons I redeem.’ **13:16** It will be for a sign on your hand and for frontlets¹¹ on your forehead, for with a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt.’¹²

Unclean Animals,” *JQR* 68 (1977): 1-15.

1 tn *Heb* “and every firstborn of man among your sons.” The addition of “man” is clearly meant to distinguish firstborn humans from animals.

sn One was to sacrifice the firstborn animals to Yahweh, but the children were to be redeemed by their fathers. The redemption price was five shekels (Num 18:15-16).

2 sn As with v. 8, the Law now requires that the children be instructed on the meaning of this observance. It is a memorial of the deliverance from bondage and the killing of the firstborn in Egypt.

3 tn *Heb* “tomorrow.”

4 tn *Heb* “and it will be when your son will ask you.”

5 tn The question is cryptic; it simply says, “What is this?” but certainly refers to the custom just mentioned. It asks, “What does this mean?” or “Why do we do this?”

6 tn The expression is “with strength of hand,” making “hand” the genitive of specification. In translation “strength” becomes the modifier, because “hand” specifies where the strength was. But of course the whole expression is anthropomorphic for the power of God.

7 tn *Heb* “house of slaves.”

8 tn *Heb* “dealt hardly in letting us go” or “made it hard to let us go” (see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 110). The verb is the simple Hiphil perfect *הקשה* (*hiqshah*, “he made hard”); the infinitive construct *לְשַׁלְּחֵנוּ* (*l’shall’khenu*, “to release us”) could be taken epegetically, meaning “he made releasing us hard.” But the infinitive more likely gives the purpose or the result after the verb “hardened himself.” The verb is figurative for “be stubborn” or “stubbornly refuse.”

9 tn The text uses “man” and “beast.”

10 tn The form is the active participle.

11 tn The word is *טוֹאפוֹת* (*toiafof*, “frontlets”). The etymology is uncertain, but the word denotes a sign or an object placed on the forehead (see *M. Shabbat* 6:1). The Gemara interprets it as a band that goes from ear to ear. In the Targum to 2 Sam 1:10 it is an armband worn by Saul (see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 110). These bands may have resembled the Egyptian practice of wearing as amulets “forms of words written on folds of papyrus tightly rolled up and sewn in linen” (W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:384).

12 sn The pattern of the passage now emerges more clearly; it concerns the grateful debt of the redeemed. In the first part eating the unleavened bread recalls the night of deliverance in Egypt, and it calls for purity. In the second part the dedication of the firstborn was an acknowledgment of the deliverance of the firstborn from bondage. They were to remember the deliverance and choose purity; they were to remember the deliverance and choose dedication. The NT will also say, “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price, therefore, glorify God” (1 Cor 6:20). Here too the truths of God’s great redemption must be learned well and retained well from generation to generation.

The Leading of God

13:17¹³ When Pharaoh released¹⁴ the people, God did not lead them¹⁵ by the way to the land¹⁶ of the Philistines,¹⁷ although¹⁸ that was nearby, for God said,¹⁹ “Lest²⁰ the people change their minds²¹ and return to Egypt when they experience²² war.” **13:18** So God brought the people around by the way of the desert to the Red Sea,²³

13 sn This short section (vv. 17-22) marks the beginning of the journey of the Israelites toward the sea and Sinai. The emphasis here is on the leading of Yahweh – but this leading is manifested in a unique, supernatural way – unlikely to be repeated with these phenomena. Although a primary application of such a passage would be difficult, the general principle is clear: God, by his clear revelation, leads his people to the fulfillment of the promise. This section has three short parts: the leading to the sea (17-18), the bones of Joseph (19), and the leading by the cloud and pillar (20-22).

14 tn The construction for this temporal clause is the temporal indicator with the *vav* (ו) consecutive, the Piel infinitive construct with a preposition, and then the subjective genitive “Pharaoh.”

15 sn The verb *נָהַג* (*nakhah*, “to lead”) is a fairly common word in the Bible for God’s leading of his people (as in Ps 23:3 for leading in the paths of righteousness). This passage illustrates what others affirm, that God leads his people in a way that is for their own good. There were shorter routes to take, but the people were not ready for them.

16 tn The word “way” is an adverbial accusative, providing the location for the verb “lead”; it is in construct so that “land of the Philistines” is a genitive of either indirect object (“to the land”) or location (“in” or “through” the land).

17 sn The term *Philistines* has been viewed by modern scholarship as an anachronism, since the Philistines were not believed to have settled in the region until the reign of Rameses III (in which case the term would not fit either the early or the late view of the exodus). But the OT clearly refers to Philistines in the days of the patriarchs. The people there in the earlier period may have been Semites, judging from their names, or they may have been migrants from Crete in the early time. The Philistines after the exodus were of Greek origin. The danger of warfare at this time was clearly with Canaanitish tribes. For further details, see K. A. Kitchen, “The Philistines,” *Peoples of Old Testament Times*, 53-54; J. M. Grintz, “The Immigration of the First Philistines in the Inscriptions,” *Tarbiz* 17 (1945): 32-42, and *Tarbiz* 19 (1947): 64; and E. Hindson, *The Philistines and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 39-59.

18 tn The particle *כִּי* (*ki*) introduces a concessive clause here (see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 73, §448).

19 tn Or “thought.”

20 tn Before a clause this conjunction *פֶּן* (*pen*) expresses fear or precaution (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 75-76, §461). It may be translated “lest, else,” or “what if.”

21 tn *נִחַם* (*niḥkem*) is the Niphal imperfect of *נָחַם* (*nakham*); it would normally be translated “repent” or “relent.” This nontheological usage gives a good illustration of the basic meaning of having a change of mind or having regrets.

22 tn *Heb* “see.”

23 tn The Hebrew term *יַם־סוּף* (*Yam Suf*) cannot be a genitive (“wilderness of the Red Sea”) because it follows a noun that is not in construct; instead, it must be an adverbial accusative, unless it is simply joined by apposition to “the wilderness” – the way to the wilderness [and] to the Red Sea (B. S. Childs, *Exodus* [OTL], 217).

sn The translation of this name as “Red Sea” comes from the sea’s Greek name in the LXX and elsewhere. The Red Sea on today’s maps is farther south, below the Sinai Peninsula. But the title Red Sea in ancient times may very well have covered both the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba (see Deut 1:1; 1 Kgs 9:26). The name “Sea of Reeds” in various English versions (usually in the form of a marginal note) and commentaries reflects the meaning of the Hebrew word *סוּף* a

and the Israelites went up from the land of Egypt prepared for battle.¹

13:19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph² had made the Israelites solemnly swear,³ “God will surely attend⁴ to you, and you will carry⁵ my bones up from this place with you.”

13:20 They journeyed from Sukkoth and camped in Etham, on the edge of the desert. **13:21** Now the LORD was going before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them in the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light,⁶ so that they could⁷ travel day or night.⁸ **13:22** He did not remove the pillar of cloud by

day nor the pillar of fire by night from before the people.⁹

The Victory at the Red Sea

14:1¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Moses: **14:2** “Tell the Israelites that they must turn and camp¹¹ before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you are to camp by the sea before Baal Zephon opposite it.¹² **14:3** Pharaoh will think¹³ regarding the Israelites, ‘They are wandering around confused¹⁴ in the land – the desert has closed in on them.’¹⁵ **14:4** I will harden¹⁶ Pharaoh’s heart, and he will chase after them. I will gain honor¹⁷ because of Pharaoh and because of all his army, and the Egyptians will know¹⁸ that I am the LORD.” So this is what they did.¹⁹

14:5 When it was reported²⁰ to the king of Egypt that the people had fled,²¹ the heart of

word for reedy water plants (Exod 2:3, 5; Isa 19:6; Jonah 2:6 [Eng. v. 5]) that may have a connection with an Egyptian word used for papyrus and other marsh plants. On this basis some have taken the term Yam Suph as perhaps referring to Lake Menzaleh or Lake Ballah, which have abundant reeds, north of the extension of the Red Sea on the western side of Sinai. Whatever exact body of water is meant, it was not merely a marshy swamp that the people waded through, but a body of water large enough to make passage impossible without divine intervention, and deep enough to drown the Egyptian army. Lake Menzaleh has always been deep enough to preclude passage on foot (E. H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 66). Among the many sources dealing with the geography, see B. F. Batto, “The Reed Sea: Requiescat in Pace,” *JBL* 102 (1983): 27-35; M. Waxman, “I Miss the Red Sea,” *Conservative Judaism* 18 (1963): 35-44; G. Coats, “The Sea Tradition in the Wilderness Theme: A Review,” *JSTOT* 12 (1979): 2-8; and K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 261-63.

1 tn The term *חָמֹשִׁים* (*khamushim*) is placed first for emphasis; it forms a circumstantial clause, explaining how they went up. Unfortunately, it is a rare word with uncertain meaning. Most translations have something to do with “in battle array” or “prepared to fight” if need be (cf. Josh 1:14; 4:12). The Targum took it as “armed with weapons.” The LXX had “in the fifth generation.” Some have opted for “in five divisions.”

2 tn Heb “he”; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

3 tn Heb “solemnly swear, saying” (so NASB). The construction uses the Hiphil infinitive absolute with the Hiphil perfect to stress that Joseph had made them take a solemn oath to carry his bones out of Egypt. “Saying” introduces the content of what Joseph said.

4 sn This verb appears also in 3:16 and 4:31. The repetition here is a reminder that God was doing what he had said he would do and what Joseph had expected.

5 tn The form is a Hiphil perfect with the *vav* (ו) consecutive; it follows in the sequence of the imperfect tense before it, and so is equal to an imperfect of injunction (because of the solemn oath). Israel took Joseph’s bones with them as a sign of piety toward the past and as a symbol of their previous bond with Canaan (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 380).

6 sn God chose to guide the people with a pillar of cloud in the day and one of fire at night, or, as a pillar of cloud and fire, since they represented his presence. God had already appeared to Moses in the fire of the bush, and so here again is revelation with fire. Whatever the exact nature of these things, they formed direct, visible revelations from God, who was guiding the people in a clear and unambiguous way. Both clouds and fire would again and again represent the presence of God in his power and majesty, guiding and protecting his people, by judging their enemies.

7 tn The infinitive construct here indicates the result of these manifestations – “so that they went” or “could go.”

8 tn These are adverbial accusatives of time.

9 sn See T. W. Mann, “The Pillar of Cloud in the Reed Sea Narrative,” *JBL* 90 (1971): 15-30.

10 sn The account recorded in this chapter is one of the best known events in all of Scripture. In the argument of the book it marks the division between the bondage in Egypt and the establishment of the people as a nation. Here is the deliverance from Egypt. The chapter divides simply in two, vv. 1-14 giving the instructions, and vv. 15-31 reporting the victory. See among others, G. Coats, “History and Theology in the Sea Tradition,” *ST* 29 (1975): 53-62; A. J. Ehlen, “Deliverance at the Sea: Diversity and Unity in a Biblical Theme,” *CTM* 44 (1973): 168-91; J. B. Scott, “God’s Saving Acts,” *The Presbyterian Journal* 38 (1979): 12-14; W. Wifall, “The Sea of Reeds as Sheol,” *ZAW* 92 (1980): 325-32.

11 tn The two imperfects follow the imperative and therefore express purpose. The point in the verses is that Yahweh was giving the orders for the direction of the march and the encampment by the sea.

12 sn The places have been tentatively identified. W. C. Kaiser summarizes the suggestions that Pi-Hahiroth as an Egyptian word may mean “temple of the [Syrian god] Hrt” or “The Hir waters of the canal” or “The Dwelling of Hator” (“Exodus,” *EBC* 2:387; see the literature on these names, including C. DeWit, *The Date and Route of the Exodus*, 17).

13 tn Heb “and Pharaoh will say.”

14 sn The word translated “wandering around confused” indicates that Pharaoh thought the Israelites would be so perplexed and confused that they would not know which way to turn in order to escape – and they would never dream of crossing the sea (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 115).

15 tn The expression has also been translated “the desert has shut [the way] for them,” and more freely “[the Israelites are] hemmed in by the desert.”

16 tn In this place the verb *חָזַק* (*hazaq*) is used; it indicates that God would make Pharaoh’s will strong or firm.

17 tn The form is *וַיִּכְרַדְדָּהּ* (*v^eikkav^{da}*), the Niphal cohortative; coming after the perfect tenses with *vav* (ו) consecutives expressing the future, this cohortative indicates the purpose of the hardening and chasing. Yahweh intended to gain glory by this final and great victory over the strength of Pharaoh. There is irony in this expression since a different form of the word was used frequently to describe Pharaoh’s hard heart. So judgment will not only destroy the wicked – it will reveal the glory and majesty of the sovereignty of God.

18 tn This is the perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) consecutive. But it announces the fulfillment of a long standing purpose – that they might know.

19 tn Heb “and they did so.”

20 tn Heb “and it was told.” The present translation uses “reported,” since this involves information given to a superior.

21 tn The verb must be given a past perfect translation because the fleeing occurred before the telling.

Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people, and the king and his servants said,¹ “What in the world have we done?”² For we have released the people of Israel³ from serving us!” **14:6** Then he prepared⁴ his chariots and took his army⁵ with him. **14:7** He took six hundred select⁶ chariots, and all the rest of the chariots of Egypt,⁷ and officers⁸ on all of them.

14:8 But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he chased after the Israelites. Now the Israelites were going out defiantly.⁹ **14:9** The Egyptians chased after them, and all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh and his horsemen and his army overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-Zephon. **14:10** When¹⁰ Pharaoh got closer,¹¹ the Israelites looked up,¹² and there were the Egyptians marching after them,¹³ and they were terrified.¹⁴ The Israelites cried out to the LORD,¹⁵

14:11 and they said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the desert?”¹⁶ What in the world¹⁷ have you done to us by bringing¹⁸ us out of Egypt? **14:12** Isn’t this what we told you¹⁹ in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone so that we can serve the Egyptians,²⁰ because it is better for us to serve²¹ the Egyptians than to die in the desert!’”²²

14:13 Moses said to the people, “Do not fear!²³ Stand firm²⁴ and see²⁵ the salvation²⁶ of the LORD that he will provide²⁷ for you today; for the Egyptians that you see today you will

1 tn Heb “and they said.” The referent (the king and his servants) is supplied for clarity.

2 tn The question literally is “What is this we have done?” The demonstrative pronoun is used as an enclitic particle for emphasis (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 24, §118).

3 tn Heb “released Israel.” By metonymy the name of the nation is used collectively for the people who constitute it (the Israelites).

4 tn Heb “bound.”

5 tn Heb “his people.”

6 tn The passive participle of the verb “to choose” means that these were “choice” or superb chariots.

7 tn Heb “every chariot of Egypt.” After the mention of the best chariots, the meaning of this description is “all the other chariots.”

8 tn The word שַׁלִּישִׁים (*shalishim*) means “officers” or some special kind of military personnel. At one time it was taken to mean a “three man chariot,” but the pictures of Egyptian chariots only show two in a chariot. It may mean officers near the king, “men of the third rank” (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 394). So the chariots and the crew represented the elite. See the old view by A. E. Cowley that linked it to a Hittite word (“A Hittite Word in Hebrew,” *JTS* 21 [1920]: 326), and the more recent work by P. C. Craigie connecting it to Egyptian “commander” (“An Egyptian Expression in the Song of the Sea: Exodus XV.4,” *VT* 20 [1970]: 85).

9 tn Heb “with a high hand”; the expression means “defiantly,” “boldly,” or “with confidence.” The phrase is usually used for arrogant sin and pride, the defiant fist, as it were. The image of the high hand can also mean the hand raised to deliver a blow (Job 38:15). So the narrative here builds tension between these two resolute forces.

10 tn The disjunctive *vav* introduces a circumstantial clause here.

11 tn Heb “drew near.”

12 tn Heb “lifted up their eyes,” an expression that indicates an intentional and careful looking – they looked up and fixed their sights on the distance.

13 tn The construction uses הִינֵה (*hinneh*) with the participle, traditionally rendered “and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them.” The deictic particle calls attention in a dramatic way to what was being seen. It captures the surprise and the sudden realization of the people.

14 tn The verb “feared” is intensified by the adverb נִיחָד (*m'od*): “they feared greatly” or “were terrified.” In one look their defiant boldness seems to have evaporated.

15 sn Their cry to the LORD was proper and necessary. But their words to Moses were a rebuke and disloyal, showing a lack of faith and understanding. Their arrogance failed them in the crisis because it was built on the arm of flesh. Moses would have to get used to this murmuring, but here he takes it in stride and gives them the proper instructions. They had

cried to the LORD, and now the LORD would deliver.

16 sn B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 396-97) notes how the speech is overly dramatic and came from a people given to using such exaggerations (Num 16:14), even using a double negative. The challenge to Moses brings a double irony. To die in the desert would be without proper burial, but in Egypt there were graves – it was a land of tombs and graves! Gesenius notes that two negatives in the sentence do not nullify each other but make the sentence all the more emphatic: “Is it because there were no graves...?” (GKC 483 §152.y).

17 tn The demonstrative pronoun has the enclitic use again, giving a special emphasis to the question (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 24, §118).

18 tn The Hebrew term הוֹצִיָנוּ (ʾ*hotsi'anu*) is the Hiphil infinitive construct with a suffix, “to bring us out.” It is used expegetically here, explaining the previous question.

19 tn Heb “Is not this the word that we spoke to you.”

20 sn U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 164) explains this statement by the people as follows: “The question appears surprising at first, for we have not read previously that such words were spoken to Moses. Nor is the purport of the protest of the Israelite foremen (v 21 [5:21]) identical with that of the words uttered now. However, from a psychological standpoint the matter can be easily explained. In the hour of peril the children of Israel remember that remonstrance, and now it seems to them that it was of a sharper character and flowed from their foresight, and that the present situation justifies it, for death awaits them at this moment in the desert.” This declaration that “we told you so,” born of fright, need not have been strictly accurate or logical.

21 tn Heb “better for us to serve.”

22 tn Since Hebrew does not use quotation marks to indicate the boundaries of quotations, there is uncertainty about whether the Israelites’ statement in Egypt includes the end of v. 12 or consists solely of “leave us alone so that we can serve the Egyptians.” In either case, the command to Moses to leave them alone rested on the assumption, spoken or unspoken, that serving Egypt would be less risky than what Moses was proposing. Now with the Egyptian army on the horizon, the Israelites are sure that their worst predictions are about to take place.

23 tn The use of אַל (*al*) with the jussive has the force of “stop fearing.” It is a more immediate negative command than לוֹ (*lo'*) with the imperfect (as in the Decalogue).

24 tn The force of this verb in the Hitpaal is “to station oneself” or “stand firm” without fleeing.

25 tn The form is an imperative with a *vav* (ו). It could also be rendered “stand firm and you will see” meaning the result, or “stand firm that you may see” meaning the purpose.

26 tn Or “victory” (NAB) or “deliverance” (NIV, NRSV).

27 tn Heb “do,” i.e., perform or accomplish.

never, ever see again.¹ **14:14** The LORD² will fight for you, and you can be still.³

14:15 The LORD said to Moses, “Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on.⁴ **14:16** And as for you,⁵ lift up your staff and extend your hand toward the sea and divide it, so that⁶ the Israelites may go through the middle of the sea on dry ground. **14:17** And as for me, I am going to harden⁷ the hearts of the Egyptians so that⁸ they will come after them, that I may be honored⁹ because¹⁰ of Pharaoh and his army and his chariots and his horsemen. **14:18** And the Egyptians will know¹¹ that I am the LORD when I have gained my honor¹² because of Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

14:19 The angel of God, who was going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them, and the pillar¹³ of cloud moved from

before them and stood behind them. **14:20** It came between the Egyptian camp and the Israelite camp; it was a dark cloud¹⁴ and it lit up the night so that one camp did not come near the other¹⁵ the whole night.¹⁶ **14:21** Moses stretched out his hand toward the sea, and the LORD drove the sea apart¹⁷ by a strong east wind all that night, and he made the sea into dry land, and the water was divided. **14:22** So the Israelites went through the middle of the sea on dry ground, the water forming a wall¹⁸ for them on their right and on their left.

14:23 The Egyptians chased them and followed them into the middle of the sea – all the horses of Pharaoh, his chariots, and his

¹ **tn** The construction uses a verbal hendiadys consisting of a Hiphil imperfect (“you will not add”) and a Qal infinitive construct with a suffix (“to see them”) – “you will no longer see them.” Then the clause adds “again, for ever.”

sn U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 164) notes that the antithetical parallelism between seeing salvation and seeing the Egyptians, as well as the threefold repetition of the word “see” cannot be accidental; so too the alliteration of the last three words beginning with *ayin* (א).

² **tn** The word order places emphasis on “the LORD” (*Heb* “Yahweh”).

³ **tn** The imperfect tense needs to be interpreted in contrast to all that Yahweh will be doing. It may be given a potential imperfect nuance (as here), or it may be obligatory to follow the command to stand firm: “you must be still.”

⁴ **tn** The text literally says, “speak to the Israelites that they may journey.” The intent of the line, using the imperative with the subordinate jussive or imperfect expressing purpose is that the speaking is the command to move.

⁵ **tn** The conjunction plus pronoun (“and you”) is emphatic – “and as for you” – before the imperative “lift up.” In contrast, v. 17 begins with “and as for me, I...”

⁶ **tn** The imperfect (or jussive) with the *vav* (ו) is sequential, coming after the series of imperatives instructing Moses to divide the sea; the form then gives the purpose (or result) of the activity – “that they may go.”

⁷ **tn** הִחֲמִי (*hinnî*) before the participle gives it the force of a *futur instans* participle, meaning “I am about to harden” or “I am going to harden” their heart.

⁸ **tn** The form again is the imperfect tense with *vav* (ו) to express the purpose or the result of the hardening. The repetition of the verb translated “come” is interesting: Moses is to divide the sea in order that the people may cross, but God will harden the Egyptians’ hearts in order that they may follow.

⁹ **tn** For the comments on this verb see the discussion in v. 4. God would get glory by defeating Egypt.

¹⁰ **tn** Or “I will get glory over.”

¹¹ **tn** The construction is unusual in that it says, “And Egypt will know.” The verb is plural, and so “Egypt” must mean “the Egyptians.” The verb is the perfect tense with the *vav* consecutive, showing that this recognition or acknowledgment by Egypt will be the result or purpose of the defeat of them by God.

¹² **tn** The form is בְּהִכָּאֵדִי (*b^ehikkav^edi*), the Niphal infinitive construct with a preposition and a suffix. For the suffix on a Niphal, see GKC 162-63 §61.c. The word forms a temporal clause in the line.

¹³ **sn** B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 400-401) makes a good case that there may have been only one pillar, one cloud; it would have been a dark cloud behind it, but in front of it, shining the way, a pillar of fire. He compares the manifestation on Sinai, when the mountain was on fire but veiled by a dark cloud (Deut 4:11; 5:22). See also Exod 13:21; Num 14:14; Deut 1:33;

Neh 9:12, 19; Josh 24:7; Pss 78:14; 105:39.

¹⁴ **tn** The two nouns “cloud” and “darkness” form a nominal hendiadys: “and it was the cloud and the darkness” means “and it was the dark cloud.” Perhaps this is what the Egyptians saw, preventing them from observing Moses and the Israelites.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “this to this”; for the use of the pronouns in this reciprocal sense of “the one to the other,” see GKC 448 §139.e, n. 3.

¹⁶ **tc** The LXX reads very differently at the end of this verse: “and there was darkness and blackness and the night passed.” B. S. Childs (*Exodus* [OTL], 218) summarizes three proposals: (1) One takes the MT as it stands and explains it along the lines of the Targum and Jewish exegesis, that there was one cloud that was dark to one group and light to the other. (2) Another tries to reconstruct a verb from the noun “darkness” or make some use of the Greek verb. (3) A third seeks a different meaning for the verb “lit,” “gave light” by comparative philology, but no consensus has been reached. Given that there is no easy solution apart from reconstructing the text, and given that the MT can be interpreted as it is, the present translation follows the MT.

¹⁷ **tn** Or “drove the sea back” (NIV, NCV, NRSV, TEV). The verb is simply the Hiphil of הָלַךְ (*halakh*, “to walk, go”). The context requires that it be interpreted along the lines of “go back, go apart.”

¹⁸ **tn** The clause literally reads, “and the waters [were] for them a wall.” The word order in Hebrew is disjunctive, with the *vav* (ו) on the noun introducing a circumstantial clause.

sn S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 119), still trying to explain things with natural explanations, suggests that a northeast wind is to be thought of (an east wind would be directly in their face he says), such as a shallow ford might cooperate with an ebb tide in keeping a passage clear. He then quotes Dillmann about the “wall” of water: “A very summary poetical and hyperbolic (xv. 8) description of the occurrence, which at most can be pictured as the drying up of a shallow ford, on both sides of which the basin of the sea was much deeper, and remained filled with water.” There is no way to “water down” the text to fit natural explanations; the report clearly shows a miraculous work of God making a path through the sea – a path that had to be as wide as half a mile in order for the many people and their animals to cross between about 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. (W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:389). The text does not say that they actually only started across in the morning watch, however.

horsemen. **14:24** In the morning watch¹ the LORD looked down² on the Egyptian army³ through the pillar of fire and cloud, and he threw the Egyptian army⁴ into a panic.⁵ **14:25** He jammed⁶ the wheels of their chariots so that they had difficulty driving,⁷ and the Egyptians said, “Let’s flee⁸ from Israel, for the LORD fights⁹ for them against Egypt!”

14:26 The LORD said to Moses, “Extend your hand toward the sea, so that the waters may flow¹⁰ back on the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen!” **14:27** So Moses extended his hand toward the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state¹¹ when the sun began to rise.¹² Now the Egyptians were fleeing¹³ be-

fore it, but the LORD overthrew¹⁴ the Egyptians in the middle of the sea. **14:28** The water returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the army of Pharaoh that was coming after the Israelites into the sea¹⁵ – not so much as one of them survived!¹⁶ **14:29** But the Israelites walked on dry ground in the middle of the sea, the water forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. **14:30** So the LORD saved¹⁷ Israel on that day from the power¹⁸ of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead¹⁹ on the shore of the sea. **14:31** When Israel saw²⁰ the great power²¹ that the LORD had exercised²² over the Egyptians, they²³ feared the LORD, and they believed in²⁴ the LORD and in his servant Moses.²⁵

¹ **tn** The night was divided into three watches of about four hours each, making the morning watch about 2:00-6:00 a.m. The text has this as “the watch of the morning,” the genitive qualifying which of the night watches was meant.

² **tn** This particular verb שָׁקַף (*shaqaf*) is a bold anthropomorphism: Yahweh looked down. But its usage is always with some demonstration of mercy or wrath. S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 120) suggests that the look might be with fiery flashes to startle the Egyptians, throwing them into a panic. Ps 77:17-19 pictures torrents of rain with lightning and thunder.

³ **tn** *Heb* “camp.” The same Hebrew word is used in Exod 14:20. Unlike the English word “camp,” it can be used of a body of people at rest (encamped) or on the move.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “camp.”

⁵ **tn** The verb הָמַם (*hamam*) means “throw into confusion.” It is used in the Bible for the panic and disarray of an army before a superior force (Josh 10:10; Judg 4:15).

⁶ **tn** The word in the text is נָסַר (*vayyasar*), which would be translated “and he turned aside” with the sense perhaps of removing the wheels. The reading in the LXX, Smr, and Syriac suggests a root אָסַר (*asar*, “to bind”). The sense here might be “clogged – presumably by their sinking in the wet sand” (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 120).

⁷ **tn** The clause is וַיִּנְהַגְרוּ בַכַּרְיֹת (vaynahagehu bikhvedut). The verb means “to drive a chariot”; here in the Piel it means “cause to drive.” The suffix is collective, and so the verbal form can be translated “and caused them to drive.” The idea of the next word is “heaviness” or “hardship”; it recalls the previous uses of related words to describe Pharaoh’s heart. Here it indicates that the driving of the crippled chariots was with difficulty.

⁸ **tn** The cohortative has the hortatory use here, “Let’s flee.” Although the form is singular, the sense of it is plural and so hortatory can be used. The form is singular to agree with the singular subject, “Egypt,” which obviously means the Egyptian army. The word for “flee” is used when someone runs from fear of immanent danger and is a different word than the one used in 14:5.

⁹ **tn** The form is the Niphal participle; it is used as the predicate here, that is, the verbal use: “the LORD is fighting.” This corresponds to the announcement in v. 14.

¹⁰ **tn** The verb, “and they will return,” is here subordinated to the imperative preceding it, showing the purpose of that act.

¹¹ **tn** The Hebrew term לְאִתְּנֹו (*l’etano*) means “to its place,” or better, “to its perennial state.” The point is that the sea here had a normal level, and now when the Egyptians were in the sea on the dry ground the water would return to that level.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “at the turning of the morning”; NASB, NIV, TEV, CEV “at daybreak.”

¹³ **tn** The clause begins with the disjunctive *vav* (ו) on the noun, signaling either a circumstantial clause or a new beginning. It could be rendered, “Although the Egyptians...Yahweh...” or “as the Egyptians...”

¹⁴ **tn** The verb means “shake out” or “shaking off.” It has the significance of “throw downward.” See Neh 5:13 or Job 38:13.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “that was coming after them into the sea.” The referent of “them” (the Israelites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “not was left among them as much as one.”

¹⁷ **tn** The Hebrew term וַיִּשַׁע (*vayyosha*) is the key summation of the chapter, and this part of the book: “So Yahweh saved Israel.” This is the culmination of all the powerful works of God through these chapters.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “the hand,” with “hand” being a metonymy for power.

¹⁹ **tn** The participle “dead” is singular, agreeing in form with “Egypt.”

²⁰ **tn** The preterite with the *vav* (ו) consecutive introduces a clause that is subordinate to the main points that the verse is making.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “the great hand,” with “hand” being a metonymy for work or power. The word play using “hand” contrasts the Lord’s hand/power at work on behalf of the Israelites with the hand/power of Egypt that would have killed them.

²² **tn** *Heb* “did, made.”

²³ **tn** *Heb* “and the people feared.”

²⁴ **tn** The verb is the Hiphil preterite of אָמַן (*aman*).

²⁵ **sn** S. R. Driver says that the belief intended here is not simply a crediting of a testimony concerning a person or a thing, but a laying firm hold morally on a person or a thing (*Exodus*, 122). Others take the Hiphil sense to be declarative, and that would indicate a considering of the object of faith trustworthy or dependable, and therefore to be acted on. In this passage it does not mean that here they came to faith, but that they became convinced that he would save them in the future.

²⁵ **sn** Here the title of “servant” is given to Moses. This is the highest title a mortal can have in the OT – the “servant of Yahweh.” It signifies more than a believer; it describes the individual as acting on behalf of God. For example, when Moses stretched out his hand, God used it as his own (Isa 63:12). Moses was God’s personal representative. The chapter records both a message of salvation and of judgment. Like the earlier account of deliverance at the Passover, this chapter can be a lesson on deliverance from present troubles – if God could do this for Israel, there is no trouble too great for him to overcome. The passage can also be understood as a picture (at least) of the deliverance at the final judgment on the world. But the Israelites used this account for a paradigm of the power of God: namely, God is able to deliver his people from danger because he is the sovereign Lord of creation. His people must learn to trust him, even in desperate situations; they must fear him and not the situation. God can bring any threat to an end by bringing his power to bear in judgment on the wicked.

The Song of Triumph

15:1¹ Then Moses and the Israelites sang² this song to the LORD. They said,³

“I will sing⁴ to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously,⁵
the horse and its rider⁶ he has thrown into the sea.

15:2 The LORD⁷ is my strength and my song,⁸
and he has become my salvation.

¹ **sn** This chapter is a song of praise sung by Moses and the people right after the deliverance from the Sea. The song itself is vv. 1b-18; it falls into three sections – praise to God (1b-3), the cause for the praise (4-13), and the conclusion (14-18). The point of the first section is that God’s saving acts inspire praise from his people; the second is that God’s powerful acts deliver his people from the forces of evil; and the third section is that God’s demonstrations of his sovereignty inspire confidence in him by his people. So the Victory Song is very much like the other declarative praise psalms – the resolve to praise, the power of God, the victory over the enemies, the incomparability of God in his redemption, and the fear of the people. See also C. Cohen, “Studies in Early Israelite Poetry I: An Unrecognized Case of Three Line Staircase Parallelism in the Song of the Sea,” *JANESCU* 7 (1975): 13-17; D. N. Freedman, “Strophe and Meter in Exodus 15,” *A Light unto My Path*, 163-203; E. Levine, “Neofiti I: A Study of Exodus 15,” *Bib* 54 (1973): 301-30; T. C. Butler, “The Song of the Sea”: Exodus 15:1-18: A Study in the Exegesis of Hebrew Poetry,” *DissAb* 32 (1971): 278-2.

² **tn** The verb is יָשִׁיר (*yashir*), a normal imperfect tense form. But after the adverb “then” this form is to be treated as a preterite (see GKC 314-15 §107.c).

³ **tn** *Heb* “and they said, saying.” This has been simplified in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁴ **tn** The form is the singular cohortative, expressing the resolution of Moses to sing the song of praise (“I will” being stronger than “I shall”).

⁵ **tn** This causal clause gives the reason for and summary of the praise. The Hebrew expression has בָּיָדָהּ; נָאֵה (*ki ga’oh ga’ah*). The basic idea of the verb is “rise up loftily” or “proudly.” But derivatives of the root carry the nuance of majesty or pride (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 132). So the idea of the perfect tense with its infinitive absolute may mean “he is highly exalted” or “he has done majestically” or “he is gloriously glorious.”

⁶ **sn** The common understanding is that Egypt did not have people riding horses at this time, and so the phrase *the horse and its rider* is either viewed as an anachronism or is interpreted to mean charioteers. The word “to ride” can mean on a horse or in a chariot. Some have suggested changing “rider” to “chariot” (re-vocalization) to read “the horse and its chariot.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “Yah.” Moses’ poem here uses a short form of the name Yahweh, traditionally rendered in English by “the LORD.”

⁸ **tn** The word זִמְרָה (*zimrat*) is problematic. It probably had a suffix *yod* (י) that was accidentally dropped because of the *yod* (י) on the divine name following. Most scholars posit another meaning for the word. A meaning of “power” fits the line fairly well, forming a hendiadys with strength – “strength and power” becoming “strong power.” Similar lines are in Isa 12:2 and Ps 118:14. Others suggest “protection” or “glory.” However, there is nothing substantially wrong with “my song” in the line – only that it would be a nicer match if it had something to do with strength.

This is my God, and I will praise him,⁹
my father’s God, and I will exalt him.

15:3 The LORD is a warrior,¹⁰
the LORD is his name.¹¹

15:4 The chariots of Pharaoh¹² and his army he has thrown into the sea, and his chosen¹³ officers were drowned¹⁴ in the Red Sea.

15:5 The depths have covered them,¹⁵
they went down to the bottom¹⁶ like a stone.

15:6 Your right hand, O LORD, was majestic¹⁷ in power,
your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy.

15:7 In the abundance of your majesty¹⁸
you have overthrown¹⁹
those who rise up against you.²⁰

⁹ **tn** The word נָהַג (*navah*) occurs only here. It may mean “beautify, adorn” with praises (see BDB 627 s.v.). See also M. Dahood, “Exodus 15:2: ‘*anwehu* and Ugaritic *snwt*,” *Bib* 59 (1979): 260-61; and M. Klein, “The Targumic *Tosefta* to Exodus 15:2,” *JJS* 26 (1975): 61-67; and S. B. Parker, “Exodus 15:2 Again,” *VT* 21 (1971): 373-79.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “man of war” (so KJV, ASV). “Warrior” is now the preferred translation since “man of war” is more commonly known today as a warrior. The expression indicates that Yahweh is one who understands how to fight and defeat the enemy. The word “war” modifies “man” to reveal that Yahweh is a warrior. Other passages use similar descriptions: Isa 42:13 has “man of wars”; Ps 24:8 has “mighty man of battle.” See F. Cross, “The Divine Warrior in Israel’s Early Cult,” *Biblical Motifs*, 11-30.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “Yahweh is his name.” As throughout, the name “Yahweh” is rendered as “the LORD” in the translation, as is typically done in English translations.

¹² **tn** Gesenius notes that the sign of the accusative, often omitted in poetry, is not found in this entire song (GKC 363 §117.b).

¹³ **tn** The word is a substantive, “choice, selection”; it is here used in the construct state to convey an attribute before a partitive genitive – “the choice of his officers” means his “choice officers” (see GKC 417 §128.r).

¹⁴ **tn** The form is a Qal passive rather than a Pual, for there is not Piel form or meaning.

¹⁵ **tn** The verb form is יִכְסֶינִי (*y’khasyumu*) is the Piel preterite. Normally a *vav* (ו) consecutive is used with the preterite, but in some ancient poems the form without the *vav* appears, as is the case frequently in this poem. That such an archaic form is used should come as no surprise, because the word also uses the *yod* (י) of the root (GKC 214 §75.dd), and the archaic suffix form (GKC 258 §91.l). These all indicate the antiquity of the poem.

¹⁶ **tn** The parasyonyms here are תְּהוֹמוֹת (*’ehomot*, “deep, ocean depths, deep waters”) and בְּנוֹלוֹת (*m’tsolot*, “the depths”); S. R. Driver says properly the “gurgling places” (*Exodus*, 134).

¹⁷ **tn** The form נִדְרִי (*ne’dari*) may be an archaic infinitive with the old ending *i*, used in place of the verb and meaning “awesome.” Gesenius says that the vowel ending may be an old case ending, especially when a preposition is inserted between the word and its genitive (GKC 253 §90.l), but he suggests a reconstruction of the form.

¹⁸ **sn** This expression is cognate with words in v. 1. Here that same greatness or majesty is extolled as in abundance.

¹⁹ **tn** Here, and throughout the song, these verbs are the prefixed conjugation that may look like the imperfect but are actually historic preterites. This verb is to “overthrow” or “throw down” – like a wall, leaving it in shattered pieces.

²⁰ **tn** The form מִכְתִּים (*qamekha*) is the active participle with a pronominal suffix. The participle is accusative, the object of the verb, but the suffix is the genitive of nearer definition (see GKC 358 §116.i).

You sent forth¹ your wrath;²
 it consumed them³ like stubble.
15:8 By the blast of your nostrils⁴ the waters were piled up,
 the flowing water stood upright like a heap,⁵
 and the deep waters were solidified in the heart of the sea.
15:9 The enemy said, ‘I will chase,⁶ I will overtake,
 I will divide the spoil;
 my desire⁷ will be satisfied on them.
 I will draw⁸ my sword, my hand will destroy them.’⁹
15:10 But¹⁰ you blew with your breath,
 and¹¹ the sea covered them.
 They sank¹² like lead in the mighty waters.
15:11 Who is like you,¹³ O LORD, among the gods?¹⁴
 Who is like you? – majestic in holiness,
 fearful in praises,¹⁵ working wonders?
15:12 You stretched out your right hand,

the earth swallowed them.¹⁶
15:13 By your loyal love you will lead¹⁷
 the people whom¹⁸ you have redeemed;
 you will guide¹⁹ them by your strength to your holy dwelling place.
15:14 The nations will hear²⁰ and tremble;
 anguish²¹ will seize²² the inhabitants of Philistia.
15:15 Then the chiefs of Edom will be terrified,²³
 trembling will seize²⁴ the leaders of Moab,
 and the inhabitants of Canaan will shake.
15:16 Fear and dread²⁵ will fall²⁶ on them;
 by the greatness²⁷ of your arm they will be as still as stone²⁸
 until²⁹ your people pass by, O LORD,
 until the people whom you have bought³⁰
 pass by.
15:17 You will bring them in³¹ and plant them in the mountain³² of your inheritance,
 in the place you made³³ for your residence, O LORD,
 the sanctuary, O LORD, that your hands have established.
15:18 The LORD will reign forever and

¹ sn The verb is the Piel of שָׁלַח (*shalakh*), the same verb used throughout for the demand on Pharaoh to release Israel. Here, in some irony, God released his wrath on them.

² sn The word *wrath* is a metonymy of cause; the effect – the judgment – is what is meant.

³ tn The verb is the prefixed conjugation, the preterite, without the consecutive *vav* (ו).

⁴ sn The phrase “the blast of your nostrils” is a bold anthropomorphic expression for the wind that came in and dried up the water.

⁵ tn The word “heap” describes the walls of water. The waters, which are naturally fluid, stood up as though they were a heap, a mound of earth. Likewise, the flowing waters deep in the ocean solidified – as though they were turned to ice (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 175).

⁶ sn W. C. Kaiser observes the staccato phrases that almost imitate the heavy, breathless heaving of the Egyptians as, with what reserve of strength they have left, they vow, “I will..., I will..., I will...” (“Exodus,” *EBC* 2:395).

⁷ tn The form is נַפְשִׁי (*nafshi*, “my soul”). But this word refers to the whole person, the body and the soul, or better, a bundle of appetites in a body. It therefore can figuratively refer to the desires or appetites (Deut 12:15; 14:26; 23:24). Here, with the verb “to be full” means “to be satisfied”; the whole expression might indicate “I will be sated with them” or “I will gorge myself.” The greedy appetite was to destroy.

⁸ tn The verb רִיק (*riq*) means “to be empty” in the Qal, and in the Hiphil “to empty.” Here the idea is to unsheathe a sword.

⁹ tn The verb is יָרַשׁ (*yarash*), which in the Hiphil means “to dispossess” or “root out.” The meaning “destroy” is a general interpretation.

¹⁰ tn “But” has been supplied here.

¹¹ tn Here “and” has been supplied.

¹² tn The verb may have the idea of sinking with a gurgling sound, like water going into a whirlpool (R. A. Cole, *Exodus* [TOTC], 124; S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 136). See F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, “The Song of Miriam,” *JNES* 14 (1955): 243-47.

¹³ tn The question is of course rhetorical; it is a way of affirming that no one is comparable to God. See C. J. Labuschagne, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament*, 22, 66-67, and 94-97.

¹⁴ sn Verses 11-17 will now focus on Yahweh as the incomparable one who was able to save Israel from their foes and afterward lead them to the promised land.

¹⁵ tn S. R. Driver suggests “praiseworthy acts” as the translation (*Exodus*, 137).

¹⁶ tn The verb is the prefixed conjugation, the preterite without the *vav* consecutive. The subject, the “earth,” must be inclusive of the sea, or it may indicate the grave or Sheol; the sea drowned them. Some scholars wish to see this as a reference to Dathan and Abiram, and therefore evidence of a later addition or compilation. It fits this passage well, however.

¹⁷ tn The verbs in the next two verses are perfect tenses, but can be interpreted as a prophetic perfect, looking to the future.

¹⁸ tn The particle זֶ (*zu*) is a relative pronoun, subordinating the next verb to the preceding.

¹⁹ tn This verb seems to mean “to guide to a watering-place” (See Ps 23:2).

²⁰ tn This verb is a prophetic perfect, assuming that the text means what it said and this song was sung at the Sea. So all these countries were yet to hear of the victory.

²¹ tn The word properly refers to “pangs” of childbirth. When the nations hear, they will be terrified.

²² tn The verb is again a prophetic perfect.

²³ tn This is a prophetic perfect.

²⁴ tn This verb is imperfect tense.

²⁵ tn The two words can form a nominal hendiadys, “a dreadful fear,” though most English versions retain the two separate terms.

²⁶ tn The form is an imperfect.

²⁷ tn The adjective is in construct form and governs the noun “arm” (“arm” being the anthropomorphic expression for what God did). See GKC 428 §132.c.

²⁸ sn For a study of the words for fear, see N. Waldman, “A Comparative Note on Exodus 15:14-16,” *JQR* 66 (1976): 189-92.

²⁹ tn Clauses beginning with עַד (*ad*) express a limit that is not absolute, but only relative, beyond which the action continues (GKC 446-47 §138.g).

³⁰ tn The verb קָנָה (*qanah*) here is the verb “acquire, purchase,” and probably not the homonym “to create, make” (see Gen 4:1; Deut 32:6; and Prov 8:22).

³¹ tn The verb is imperfect.

³² sn The “mountain” and the “place” would be wherever Yahweh met with his people. It here refers to Canaan, the land promised to the patriarchs.

³³ tn The verb is perfect tense, referring to Yahweh’s previous choice of the holy place.

ever!

15:19 For the horses of Pharaoh came with his chariots and his footmen into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea on them, but the Israelites walked on dry land in the middle of the sea.”

15:20 Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a hand-drum in her hand, and all the women went out after her with hand-drums and with dances.¹ **15:21** Miriam sang in response² to them, “Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and its rider he has thrown into the sea.”³

The Bitter Water

15:22⁴ Then Moses led Israel to journey⁵ away from the Red Sea. They went out to the Desert of Shur, walked for three days⁶ into the desert, and found no water. **15:23** Then they came to Marah,⁷ but they were not able to drink⁸ the waters of

¹ **sn** See J. N. Easton, “Dancing in the Old Testament,” *Exp-Tim* 86 (1975): 136-40.

² **tn** The verb *אָנַח* (*anaḥ*) normally means “to answer,” but it can be used more technically to describe antiphonal singing in Hebrew and in Ugaritic.

³ **sn** This song of the sea is, then, a great song of praise for Yahweh’s deliverance of Israel at the Sea, and his preparation to lead them to the promised land, much to the (anticipat-ed) dread of the nations. The principle here, and elsewhere in Scripture, is that the people of God naturally respond to God in praise for his great acts of deliverance. Few will match the powerful acts that were exhibited in Egypt, but these nonetheless set the tone. The song is certainly typological of the song of the saints in heaven who praise God for delivering them from the bondage of this world by judging the world. The focus of the praise, though, still is on the person (attributes) and works of God.

⁴ **sn** The first event of the Israelites’ desert experience is a failure, for they murmur against Yahweh and are given a stern warning – and the provision of sweet water. The event teaches that God is able to turn bitter water into sweet water for his people, and he promises to do such things if they obey. He can provide for them in the desert – he did not bring them into the desert to let them die. But there is a deeper level to this story – the healing of the water is incidental to the healing of the people, their lack of trust. The passage is arranged in a neat chiasm, starting with a journey (A), ending with the culmination of the journey (A’); developing to bitter water (B), resolving to sweet water (B’); complaints by the people (C), leading to to the instructions for the people (C’); and the central turning point is the wonder miracle (D).

⁵ **tn** The verb form is unusual; the normal expression is with the Qal, which expresses that they journeyed. But here the Hiphil is used to underscore that Moses caused them to journey – and he is following God. So the point is that God was leading Israel to the bitter water.

⁶ **sn** The mention that they travelled for three days into the desert is deliberately intended to recall Moses’ demand that they go three days into the wilderness to worship. Here, three days in, they find bitter water and complain – not worship.

⁷ **sn** The Hebrew word “Marah” means “bitter.” This motif will be repeated four times in this passage to mark the central problem. Earlier in the book the word had been used for the “bitter herbs” in the Passover, recalling the bitter labor in bondage. So there may be a double reference here – to the bitter waters and to Egypt itself – God can deliver from either.

⁸ **tn** The infinitive construct here provides the direct object for the verb “to be able,” answering the question of what they

Marah, because⁹ they were bitter.¹⁰ (That is¹¹ why its name was¹² Marah.)

15:24 So the people murmured¹³ against Moses, saying, “What can¹⁴ we drink?”

15:25 He cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him¹⁵ a tree.¹⁶ When Moses¹⁷ threw it into the water, the water became safe to drink. There the LORD¹⁸ MADE FOR THEM¹⁹ A BINDING ORDINANCE,²⁰ AND THERE HE TESTED²¹ THEM. **15:26** He said, “If you

were not able to do.

⁹ **tn** The causal clause here provides the reason for their being unable to drink the water, as well as a clear motivation for the name.

¹⁰ **sn** Many scholars have attempted to explain these things with natural phenomena. Here Marah is identified with Ain Hawarah. It is said that the waters of this well are notoriously salty and brackish; Robinson said it was six to eight feet in diameter and the water about two feet deep; the water is unpleasant, salty, and somewhat bitter. As a result the Arabs say it is the worst tasting water in the area (W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:398). But that would not be a sufficient amount of water for the number of Israelites in the first place, and in the second, they could not drink it at all. But third, how did Moses change it?

¹¹ **tn** The *al-ken* (אל־כֵּן) formula in the Pentateuch serves to explain to the reader the reason for the way things were. It does not necessarily mean here that Israel named the place – but they certainly could have.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “one called its name,” the expression can be translated as a passive verb if the subject is not expressed.

¹³ **tn** The verb *וַיִּלֹּן* (*vayyilonu*) from *לָן* (*lan*) is a much stronger word than “to grumble” or “to complain.” It is used almost exclusively in the wilderness wandering stories, to describe the rebellion of the Israelites against God (see also Ps 59:14-15). They were not merely complaining – they were questioning God’s abilities and motives. The action is something like a parliamentary vote of no confidence.

¹⁴ **tn** The imperfect tense here should be given a potential nuance: “What can we drink?” since the previous verse reports that they were not able to drink the water.

sn It is likely that Moses used words very much like this when he prayed. The difference seems to lie in the prepositions – he cried “to” Yahweh, but the people murmured “against” Moses.

¹⁵ **tn** The verb is *וַיַּרְהוּ* (*vayyorehu*, “and he showed him”). It is the Hiphil preterite from *יָרָה* (*yarah*), which has a basic meaning of “to point, show, direct.” It then came to mean “to teach”; it is the verb behind the noun “Law” (*תּוֹרָה*, *torah*).

sn U. Cassuto notes that here is the clue to the direction of the narrative: Israel needed God’s instruction, the Law, if they were going to enjoy his provisions (*Exodus*, 184).

¹⁶ **tn** Or “a [piece of] wood” (cf. NAB, NIV, NRSV, TEV, CEV); NLT “a branch.”

sn S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 143) follows some local legends in identifying this tree as one that is supposed to have – even to this day – the properties necessary for making bitter water sweet. B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 436) reports that no such tree has ever been found, but then he adds that this does not mean there was not such a bush in the earlier days. He believes that here God used a natural means (“showed, instructed”) to sweeten the water. He quotes Ben Sira as saying God had created these things with healing properties in them.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “there he”; the referent (the LORD) is supplied for clarity.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “for him” (referring to Israel as a whole).

²⁰ **tn** This translation interprets the two nouns as a hendiadys: “a statute and an ordinance” becomes “a binding ordinance.”

²¹ **tn** The verb *וַיִּסְאֵהוּ* (*nissahu*, “and he tested him [them]”) is from the root *סָאָה* (*nasah*). The use of this word in the Bible indicates that there is question, doubt, or uncertainty about the object being tested.

will diligently obey¹ the LORD your God, and do what is right² in his sight, and pay attention³ to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, then all⁴ the diseases⁵ that I brought on the Egyptians I will not bring on you, for I, the LORD, am your healer.^{7,6}

15:27 Then they came to Elim,⁷ where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees, and they camped there by the water.

The Provision of Manna

16:1⁸ When⁹ they journeyed from Elim, the entire company¹⁰ of Israelites came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their exodus¹¹ from the land of Egypt. 16:2 The entire company¹² of Israelites murmured against Moses and Aaron in the desert. 16:3 The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died¹³ by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by¹⁴ the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full,¹⁵ for you have brought us out into this desert to kill¹⁶ this whole assembly with hunger!”

sn The whole episode was a test from God. He led them there through Moses and let them go hungry and thirsty. He wanted to see how great their faith was.

1 tn The construction uses the infinitive absolute and the imperfect tense of *שמע* (*shama'*). The meaning of the verb is idiomatic here because it is followed by “to the voice of Yahweh your God.” When this is present, the verb is translated “obey.” The construction is in a causal clause. It reads, “If you will diligently obey.” Gesenius points out that the infinitive absolute in a conditional clause also emphasizes the importance of the condition on which the consequence depends (GKC 342-43 §113.o).

2 tn The word order is reversed in the text: “and the right in his eyes you do,” or, “[if] you do what is right in his eyes.” The conditional idea in the first clause is continued in this clause.

3 tn *Heb* “give ear.” This verb and the next are both perfect tenses with the *vav* (h) consecutive; they continue the sequence of the original conditional clause.

4 tn The substantive *כול* (*kol*, “all of”) in a negative clause can be translated “none of.”

5 sn The reference is no doubt to the plagues that Yahweh has just put on them. These will not come on God’s true people. But the interesting thing about a conditional clause like this is that the opposite is also true – “if you do not obey, then I will bring these diseases.”

6 tn The form is *רופאך* (*rofa' ekha*), a participle with a pronominal suffix. The word is the predicate after the pronoun “I”: “I [am] your healer.” The suffix is an objective genitive – the LORD heals them.

sn The name *I Yahweh am your healer* comes as a bit of a surprise. One might expect, “I am Yahweh who heals your water,” but it was the people he came to heal because their faith was weak. God lets Israel know here that he can control the elements of nature to bring about a spiritual response in Israel (see Deut 8).

7 sn Judging from the way the story is told they were not far from the oasis. But God had other plans for them, to see if they would trust him wholeheartedly and obey. They did not do very well this first time, and they will have to learn how to obey. The lesson is clear: God uses adversity to test his people’s loyalty. The response to adversity must be prayer to God, for he can turn the bitter into the sweet, the bad into the good, and the prospect of death into life.

8 sn Exod 16 plays an important part in the development of the book’s theme. It is part of the wider section that is the prologue leading up to the covenant at Sinai, a part of which was the obligation of obedience and loyalty (P. W. Ferris, Jr., “The Manna Narrative of Exodus 16:1-10,” *JETS* 18 [1975]: 191-99). The record of the wanderings in the wilderness is selective and not exhaustive. It may have been arranged somewhat topically for instructional reasons. U. Cassuto describes this section of the book as a didactic anthology arranged according to association of both context and language (*Exodus*, 187). Its themes are: lack of vital necessities, murmuring, proving, and providing. All the wilderness stories reiterate the same motifs. So, later, when Israel arrived in Canaan, they would look back and be reminded that it was Yahweh who brought them all the way, in spite of their rebellions. Because he is their Savior and their Provider, he will demand loyalty from them. In the Manna Narrative there is murmuring over the lack of bread (1-3), the disputation with Moses (4-8), the appearance of the glory and the promise of bread (9-12), the provision (13-22), the instructions for the Sabbath (23-30), and the memorial manna (31-36).

9 tn The sentence begins with a preterite and *vav* (v) consecutive, which can be subordinated to the next clause with the preterite and *vav* consecutive. Here it has been treated as a temporal clause.

10 tn The word is often rendered “congregation” (so KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV), but the modern perception of a congregation is not exactly what is in mind in the desert. Another possible rendering is “community” (NAB, NIV, NCV, TEV) or “assembly.” The Hebrew word is used of both good and bad groups (Judg 14:8; Ps 1:5; 106:17-18).

11 tn The form in the text is *צאתם* (*‘tse’tam*, “after their going out”). It clearly refers to their deliverance from Egypt, and so it may be vividly translated.

12 tn Or “community” or “assembly.”

13 tn The text reads: *מי ייתן מותנו* (*mi-yitten mutenu*, “who will give our dying”) meaning “If only we had died.” *מי ייתן* is the Qal infinitive construct with the suffix. This is one way that Hebrew expresses the optative with an infinitive construct. See R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 91-92, §547.

14 tn The form is a Qal infinitive construct used in a temporal clause, and the verb “when we ate” has the same structure.

15 sn That the complaint leading up to the manna is unjustified can be seen from the record itself. They left Egypt with flocks and herds and very much cattle, and about 45 days later they are complaining that they are without food. Moses reminded them later that they lacked nothing (Deut 3:7; for the whole sermon on this passage, see 8:1-20). Moreover, the complaint is absurd because the food of work gangs was far more meager than they recall. The complaint was really against Moses. They crave the eating of meat and of bread and so God will meet that need; he will send bread from heaven and quail as well.

16 tn *לְהַמִּית* (*‘lehamit*) is the Hiphil infinitive construct showing purpose. The people do not trust the intentions or the plan of their leaders and charge Moses with bringing everyone out to kill them.

16:4 Then the LORD said to Moses, “I am going to rain¹ bread from heaven for you, and the people will go out² and gather the amount for each day, so that I may test them.³ Will they will walk in my law⁴ or not? **16:5** On the sixth day⁵ they will prepare what they bring in, and it will be twice as much as they gather every other day.”⁶

16:6 Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “In the evening⁷ you will know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt, **16:7** and in the morning you will see⁸ the glory of the LORD, because he has heard⁹ your murmurings against the LORD. As for us, what are we,¹⁰ that you should murmur against us?”

16:8 Moses said, “You will know this¹¹ when the LORD gives you¹² meat to eat in the evening and bread in the morning to satisfy you, because the LORD has heard your murmurings that you are murmuring against him. As for us, what are we?¹³ Your murmurings are not against us,¹⁴ but against the LORD.”

16:9 Then Moses said to Aaron, “Tell the whole community¹⁵ of the Israelites, ‘Come¹⁶ before the LORD, because he has heard your murmurings.’”

16:10 As Aaron spoke¹⁷ to the whole community of the Israelites and they looked toward the desert, there the glory of the LORD¹⁸ appeared¹⁹ in the cloud, **16:11** and the LORD spoke to Moses: **16:12** “I have heard the murmurings of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘During the evening²⁰ you will eat meat,²¹ and in the morning you will

1 tn The participle הִנְנִי (*himni*) before the active participle indicates the imminent future action: “I am about to rain.”

2 tn This verb and the next are the Qal perfect tenses with *vav* (ו) consecutives; they follow the sequence of the participle, and so are future in orientation. The force here is instruction – “they will go out” or “they are to go out.”

3 tn The verb in the purpose/result clause is the Piel imperfect of נָסָה (*nasah*), אֲנַסְנֵהוּ (*anassenu*) – “in order that I may prove them [him].” The giving of the manna will be a test of their obedience to the detailed instructions of God as well as being a test of their faith in him (if they believe him they will not gather too much). In chap. 17 the people will test God, showing that they do not trust him.

4 sn The word “law” here properly means “direction” at this point (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 146), but their obedience here would indicate also whether or not they would be willing to obey when the Law was given at Sinai.

5 tn *Heb* “and it will be on the sixth day.”

6 sn There is a question here concerning the legislation – the people were not told why to gather twice as much on the sixth day. In other words, this instruction seems to presume that they knew about the Sabbath law. That law will be included in this chapter in a number of ways, suggesting to some scholars that this chapter is out of chronological order, placed here for a purpose. Some argue that the manna episode comes after the revelation at Sinai. But it is not necessary to take such a view. God had established the Sabbath in the creation, and if Moses has been expounding the Genesis traditions in his teachings then they would have known about that.

7 tn The text simply has “evening, and you will know.” Gesenius notes that the perfect tense with the *vav* consecutive occurs as the apodosis to temporal clauses or their equivalents. Here the first word implies the idea “[when it becomes] evening” or simply “[in the] evening” (GKC 337-38 §112.00).

8 sn Moses is very careful to make sure that they know it is Yahweh who has brought them out, and it will be Yahweh who will feed them. They are going to be convinced of this now.

9 tn *Heb* “morning, and you will see.”

9 tn The form is a Qal infinitive construct with a preposition and a suffix. It forms an adverbial clause, usually of time, but here a causal clause.

10 tn The words “as for us” attempt to convey the force of the Hebrew word order, which puts emphasis on the pronoun: “and we – what?” The implied answer to the question is that Moses and Aaron are nothing, merely the messengers. The next verse repeats the question to further press the seriousness of what the Israelites are doing.

11 tn “You will know this” has been added to make the line smooth. Because of the abruptness of the lines in the verse, and the repetition with v. 7, B. S. Childs (*Exodus* [OTL], 273) thinks that v. 8 is merely a repetition by scribal error – even though the versions render it as the MT has it. But B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 447) suggests that the contrast with vv. 6 and 7 is important for another reason – there Moses and Aaron speak, and it is smooth and effective, but here only Moses speaks, and it is labored and clumsy. “We should realize that Moses had properly claimed to be no public speaker.”

12 tn Here again is an infinitive construct with the preposition forming a temporal clause.

13 tn The words “as for us” attempt to convey the force of the Hebrew word order, which puts emphasis on the pronoun: “and we – what?” The implied answer to the question is that Moses and Aaron are nothing, merely the messengers.

14 tn The word order is “not against us [are] your murmurings.”

15 tn Or “congregation” (KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV); the same word occurs in v. 10.

16 tn The verb means “approach, draw near.” It is used in the Torah of drawing near for religious purposes. It is possible that some sacrifice was involved here, but no mention is made of that.

17 tn *Heb* “and it was as Aaron spoke.” The construction uses the temporal indicator and then the Piel infinitive construct followed by the subjective genitive “Aaron.”

18 sn S. R. Driver says, “A brilliant glow of fire...symbolizing Jehovah’s presence, gleamed through the cloud, resting...on the Tent of Meeting. The cloud shrouds the full brilliancy of the glory, which human eye could not behold” (*Exodus*, 147-48; see also Ezek 1:28; 3:12, 23; 8:4; 9:3, et al.). A Hebrew word often translated “behold” or “lo” introduces the surprising sight.

19 tn The verb is the Niphal perfect of the verb “to see” – “it was seen.” But the standard way of translating this form is from the perspective of Yahweh as subject – “he appeared.”

20 tn *Heb* “during the evenings”; see Exod 12:6.

21 sn One of the major interpretive difficulties is the comparison between Exod 16 and Num 11. In Numbers we find that the giving of the manna was about 24 months after the Exod 16 time (assuming there was a distinct time for this chapter), that it was after the erection of the tabernacle, that *Taberah* (the Burning) preceded it (not in Exod 16), that the people were tired of the manna (not that there was no bread to eat) and so God would send the quail, and that there was a severe tragedy over it. In Exod 16 both the manna and the quail are given on the same day, with no mention of quail on the following days. Contemporary scholarship generally assigns the accounts to two different sources because complete reconciliation seems impossible. Even if we argue that

be satisfied⁴ with bread, so that you may know² that I am the LORD your God.”³

16:13 In the evening the quail⁴ came up and covered the camp, and in the morning a layer of dew was all around the camp. **16:14** When⁵ the layer of dew had evaporated,⁶ there on the surface of the desert was a thin flaky substance,⁷

thin like frost on the earth. **16:15** When⁸ the Israelites saw it, they said to one another,⁹ “What is it?” because they did not know what it was.¹⁰ Moses said to them, “It is the bread¹¹ that the LORD has given you for food.¹²

16:16 “This is what¹³ the LORD has commanded:¹⁴ ‘Each person is to gather¹⁵ from it what he can eat, an omer¹⁶ per person¹⁷ according to the number¹⁸ of your people;¹⁹ each one will pick it up²⁰ for whoever lives²¹ in his tent.’”

Exodus has a thematic arrangement and “telescopes” some things to make a point, there will still be difficulties in harmonization. Two considerations must be kept in mind: 1) First, they could be separate events entirely. If this is true, then they should be treated separately as valid accounts of things that appeared or occurred during the period of the wanderings. Similar things need not be the same thing. 2) Secondly, strict chronological order is not always maintained in the Bible narratives, especially if it is a didactic section. Perhaps Exod 16 describes the initiation of the giving of manna as God’s provision of bread, and therefore placed in the prologue of the covenant, and Num 11 is an account of a mood which developed over a period of time in response to the manna. Num 11 would then be looking back from a different perspective.

1 tn The verb means “to be sated, satisfied”; in this context it indicates that they would have sufficient bread to eat – they would be full.

2 tn The form is a Qal perfect with the *vav* (ו) consecutive; it is in sequence with the imperfect tenses before it, and so this is equal to an imperfect nuance. But, from the meanings of the words, it is clear that this will be the outcome of their eating the food, a divinely intended outcome.

3 sn This verse supports the view taken in chap. 6 concerning the verb “to know.” Surely the Israelites by now knew that Yahweh was their God. Yes, they did. But they had not experienced what that meant; they had not received the fulfillment of the promises.

4 sn These are migratory birds, said to come up in the spring from Arabia flying north and west, and in the fall returning. They fly with the wind, and so generally alight in the evening, covering the ground. If this is part of the explanation, the divine provision would have had to alter their flight paths to bring them to the Israelites, and bring them in vast numbers.

5 tn Heb “and [the dew...] went up.”

6 tn The preterite with *vav* (ו) consecutive is here subordinated as a temporal clause to the main clause; since that clause calls special attention to what was there after the dew evaporated.

7 sn Translations usually refer to the manna as “bread.” In fact it appears to be more like grain, because it could be ground in hand-mills and made into cakes. The word involved says it is thin, flakelike (if an Arabic etymological connection is correct). What is known about it from the Bible in Exodus is that it was a very small flakelike substance, it would melt when the sun got hot, if left over it bred worms and became foul, it could be ground, baked, and boiled, it was abundant enough for the Israelites to gather an omer a day per person, and they gathered it day by day throughout the wilderness sojourn. Num 11 says it was like coriander seed with the appearance of bdellium, it tasted like fresh oil, and it fell with the dew. Deut 8:3 says it was unknown to Israel or her ancestors; Psalm 78:24 parallels it with grain. Some scholars compare ancient references to honeydew that came from the heavens. F. S. Bodenheimer (“The Manna of Sinai,” *BA* 10 [1947]: 2) says that it was a sudden surprise for the nomadic Israelites because it provided what they desired – sweetness. He says that it was a product that came from two insects, making the manna a honeydew excretion from plant lice and scale insects. The excretion hardens and drops to the ground as a sticky solid. He notes that some cicadas are called *man* in Arabic. This view accounts for some of the things in these passages: the right place, the right time, the right description, and a similar taste. But there are major difficulties: Exodus requires a far greater amount, it could breed worms, it could

melt away, it could be baked into bread, it could decay and stink. The suggestion is in no way convincing. Bodenheimer argues that “worms” could mean “ants” that carried them away, but that is contrived – the text could have said ants. The fact that the Bible calls it “bread” creates no problem. לֶחֶם (*lekhem*) is used in a wide range of meanings from bread to all kinds of food including goats (Judg 13:15-16) and honey (1 Sam 14:24-28). Scripture does not say that manna was the only thing that they ate for the duration. But they did eat it throughout the forty years. It simply must refer to some supernatural provision for them in their diet. Modern suggestions may invite comparison and analysis, but they do not satisfy or explain the text.

8 tn The preterite with *vav* consecutive is here subordinated to the next verb as a temporal clause. The main point of the verse is what they said.

9 tn Heb “a man to his brother.”

10 tn The text has: וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּרֵדָהּ לָאֵלֹהִים כִּי לֹא יָדְעוּ מַה הִוא (*man hu' ki lo' yad'u mah hu'*). From this statement the name “manna” was given to the substance. וְכֵן for “what” is not found in Hebrew, but appears in Syriac as a contraction of *ma den*, “what then?” In Aramaic and Arabic *man* is “what?” The word is used here apparently for the sake of etymology. B. S. Childs (*Exodus* [OTL], 274) follows the approach that any connections to words that actually meant “what?” are unnecessary, for it is a play on the name (whatever it may have been) and therefore related only by sound to the term being explained. This, however, presumes that a substance was known prior to this account – a point that Deuteronomy does not seem to allow. S. R. Driver says that it is not known how early the contraction came into use, but that this verse seems to reflect it (*Exodus*, 149). Probably one must simply accept that in the early Israelite period *man* meant “what?” There seems to be sufficient evidence to support this. See *EA* 286,5; *UT* 435; *DNWSJ* 1:157.

11 sn B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 454-55) suggests that Moses was saying to them, “It is not manna. It is the food Yahweh has given you.” He comes to this conclusion based on the strange popular etymology from the interrogative word, noting that people do not call things “what?”

12 sn For other views see G. Vermès, “‘He Is the Bread’ Targum Neofiti Ex. 16:15,” *SJLA* 8 (1975): 139-46; and G. J. Cowlings, “Targum Neofiti Ex. 16:15,” *AJBA* (1974-75): 93-105.

13 tn Heb “the thing that.”

14 tn The perfect tense could be taken as a definite past with Moses now reporting it. In this case a very recent past. But in declaring the word from Yahweh it could be instantaneous, and receive a present tense translation – “here and now he commands you.”

15 tn The form is the plural imperative: “Gather [you] each man according to his eating.”

16 sn The omer is an amount mentioned only in this chapter, and its size is unknown, except by comparison with the ephah (v. 36). A number of recent English versions approximate the omer as “two quarts” (cf. NCV, CEV, NLT); TEV “two litres.”

17 tn Heb “for a head.”

18 tn The word “number” is an accusative that defines more precisely how much was to be gathered (see *GKC* 374 §118.h).

19 tn Traditionally “souls.”

20 tn Heb “will take.”

21 tn “lives” has been supplied.

16:17 The Israelites did so, and they gathered – some more, some less. 16:18 When¹ they measured with an omer, the one who gathered much had nothing left over, and the one who gathered little lacked nothing; each one had gathered what he could eat.

16:19 Moses said to them, “No one² is to keep any of it³ until morning.” 16:20 But they did not listen to Moses; some⁴ kept part of it until morning, and it was full⁵ of worms and began to stink, and Moses was angry with them. 16:21 So they gathered it each morning,⁶ each person according to what he could eat, and when the sun got hot, it would melt.⁷ 16:22 And⁸ on the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, two omers⁹ per person,¹⁰ and all the leaders¹¹ of the community¹² came and told¹³ Moses. 16:23 He said to them, “This is what the LORD has said: ‘Tomorrow is a time of cessation from work,¹⁴ a holy Sabbath¹⁵ to the LORD. Whatever you want¹⁶ bake, bake today,¹⁷ whatever you want to boil, boil today; whatever is left put aside for yourselves to be kept until morning.’”

16:24 So they put it aside until the morning, just as Moses had commanded, and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it.

¹ tn The preterite with the *vav* (ו) consecutive is subordinated here as a temporal clause.

² tn The address now is for “man” (אִישׁ, *’ish*), “each one”; here the instruction seems to be focused on the individual heads of the households.

³ tn Or “some of it,” “from it.”

⁴ tn Heb “men”; this usage is designed to mean “some” (see GKC 447 §138.h, n. 1).

⁵ tn The verb וַיִּרְבּוּ (*vayyarum*) is equivalent to a passive – “it was changed” – to which “worms” is added as an accusative of result (GKC 388-89 §121.d, n. 2).

⁶ tn Heb “morning by morning.” This is an example of the repetition of words to express the distributive sense; here the meaning is “every morning” (see GKC 388 §121.c).

⁷ tn The perfect tenses here with *vav* (ו) consecutives have the frequentative sense; they function in a protasis-apodosis relationship (GKC 494 §159.g).

⁸ tn Heb “and it happened/was.”

⁹ tn This construction is an exception to the normal rule for the numbers 2 through 10 taking the object numbered in the plural. Here it is “two of the omer” or “the double of the omer” (see GKC 433 §134.e).

¹⁰ tn Heb “for one.”

¹¹ tn The word suggests “the ones lifted up” above others, and therefore the rulers or the chiefs of the people.

¹² tn Or “congregation” (KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV).

¹³ sn The meaning here is probably that these leaders, the natural heads of the families in the clans, saw that people were gathering twice as much and they reported this to Moses, perhaps afraid it would stink again (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 197).

¹⁴ tn The noun שְׁבִיטָה (*shabbat*) has the abstract ending on it: “resting, ceasing.” The root word means “cease” from something, more than “to rest.” The Law would make it clear that they were to cease from their normal occupations and do no common work.

¹⁵ tn The technical expression is now used: שְׁבִיטַת־קֹדֶשׁ (*shabbat-qodesh*, “a holy Sabbath”) meaning a “cessation of/for holiness” for Yahweh. The rest was to be characterized by holiness.

¹⁶ tn The two verbs in these objective noun clauses are desiderative imperfects – “bake whatever you want to bake.”

¹⁷ tn The word “today” is implied from the context.

16:25 Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the area.¹⁸ 16:26 Six days you will gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.”

16:27 On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather it, but they found nothing. 16:28 So the LORD said to Moses, “How long do you refuse¹⁹ to obey my commandments and my instructions? 16:29 See, because the LORD has given you the Sabbath, that is why²⁰ he is giving you food for two days on the sixth day. Each of you stay where you are;²¹ let no one²² go out of his place on the seventh day.” 16:30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

16:31 The house of Israel²³ called its name “manna.”²⁴ It was like coriander seed and was white, and it tasted²⁵ like wafers with honey.

16:32 Moses said, “This is what²⁶ the LORD has commanded: ‘Fill an omer with it to be kept²⁷ for generations to come,²⁸ so that they may see²⁹ the food I fed you in the desert when I brought you out from the land of Egypt.’” 16:33 Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put in it an omer full of manna, and place it before the LORD to be kept for generations to come.” 16:34 Just as the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the Testimony³⁰ for safekeeping.³¹

16:35 Now the Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a land that was inhabited; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. 16:36 (Now an omer is one tenth of an ephah.)³²

¹⁸ tn Heb “in the field” (so KJV, ASV, NASB, NCV, NRSV); NAB, NIV, NLT “on the ground.”

¹⁹ tn The verb is plural, and so it is addressed to the nation and not to Moses. The perfect tense in this sentence is the characteristic perfect, denoting action characteristic, or typical, of the past and the present.

²⁰ sn Noting the rabbinic teaching that the giving of the Sabbath was a sign of God’s love – it was accomplished through the double portion on the sixth day – B. Jacob says, “God made no request unless He provided the means for its execution” (*Exodus*, 461).

²¹ tn Heb “remain, a man where he is.”

²² tn Or “Let not anyone go” (see GKC 445 §138.d).

²³ sn The name “house of Israel” is unusual in this context.

²⁴ tn Hebrew מָן (*man*).

²⁵ tn Heb “like seed of coriander, white, its taste was.”

²⁶ tn Heb “This is the thing that.”

²⁷ tn Heb “for keeping.”

²⁸ tn Heb “according to your generations” (see Exod 12:14).

²⁹ tn In this construction after the particle expressing purpose or result, the imperfect tense has the nuance of final imperfect, equal to a subjunctive in the classical languages.

³⁰ sn The “Testimony” is a reference to the Ark of the Covenant; so the pot of manna would be placed before Yahweh in the tabernacle. W. C. Kaiser says that this later instruction came from a time after the tabernacle had been built (see Exod 25:10-22; W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:405). This is not a problem since the final part of this chapter had to have been included at the end of the forty years in the desert.

³¹ tn “for keeping.”

³² tn The words “omer” and “ephah” are transliterated Hebrew words. The omer is mentioned only in this passage. (It is different from a “homor” [cf. Ezek 45:11-14].) An ephah was a dry measure whose capacity is uncertain: “Quotations given for the ephah vary from ca. 45 to 20 liters” (C. Houtman,

Water at Massa and Meribah

17:1¹ The whole community² of the Israelites traveled on their journey³ from the Desert of Sin according to the LORD's instruction, and they pitched camp in Rephidim.⁴ Now⁵ there was no

Exodus, 2:340-41).

sn The point of this chapter, with all its instructions and reports included, is God's miraculous provision of food for his people. This is a display of sovereign power that differs from the display of military power. Once again the story calls for faith, but here it is faith in Yahweh to provide for his people. The provision is also a test to see if they will obey the instructions of God. Deut 8 explains this. The point, then, is that God provides for the needs of his people that they may demonstrate their dependence on him by obeying him. The exposition of this passage must also correlate to John 6. God's providing manna from heaven to meet the needs of his people takes on new significance in the application that Jesus makes of the subject to himself. There the requirement is the same – will they believe and obey? But at the end of the event John explains that they murmured about Jesus.

1 sn This is the famous story telling how the people rebelled against Yahweh when they thirsted, saying that Moses had brought them out into the wilderness to kill them by thirst, and how Moses with the staff brought water from the rock. As a result of this the name was called Massa and Meribah because of the testing and the striving. It was a challenge to Moses' leadership as well as a test of Yahweh's presence. The narrative in its present form serves an important point in the argument of the book. The story turns on the gracious provision of God who can give his people water when there is none available. The narrative is structured to show how the people strove. Thus, the story intertwines God's free flowing grace with the sad memory of Israel's sins. The passage can be divided into three parts: the situation and the complaint (1-3), the cry and the miracle (4-6), and the commemoration by naming (7).

2 tn Or "congregation" (KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV).

3 tn The text says that they journeyed "according to their journeyings." Since the verb form (and therefore the derived noun) essentially means to pull up the tent pegs and move along, this verse would be saying that they traveled by stages, or, from place to place.

4 sn The location is a bit of a problem. Exod 19:1-2 suggests that it is near Sinai, whereas it is normally located near Kadesh in the north. Without any details provided, M. Noth concludes that two versions came together (*Exodus* [OTL], 138). S. R. Driver says that the writer wrote not knowing that they were 24 miles apart (*Exodus*, 157). Critics have long been bothered by this passage because of the two names given at the same place. If two sources had been brought together, it is not possible now to identify them. But Noth insisted that if there were two names there were two different locations. The names Massah and Meribah occur alone in Scripture (Deut 9:22, and Num 20:1 for examples), but together in Ps 95 and in Deut 33:8. But none of these passages is a clarification of the difficulty. Most critics would argue that Massah was a secondary element that was introduced into this account, because Exod 17 focuses on Meribah. From that starting point they can diverge greatly on the interpretation, usually having something to do with a water test. But although Num 20 is parallel in several ways, there are major differences: 1) it takes place 40 years later than this, 2) the name Kadesh is joined to the name Meribah there, and 3) Moses is punished there. One must conclude that if an event could occur twice in similar ways (complaint about water would be a good candidate for such), then there is no reason a similar name could not be given.

5 tn The disjunctive *vav* introduces a parenthetical clause that is essential for this passage – there was no water.

water for the people to drink.⁶ 17:2 So the people contended⁷ with Moses, and they said, "Give us water to drink!"⁸ Moses said to them, "Why do you contend⁹ with me? Why do you test¹⁰ the LORD?" 17:3 But the people were very thirsty¹¹ there for water, and they murmured against Moses and said, "Why in the world¹² did you bring us up out of Egypt – to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?"¹³

17:4 Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What will I do with¹⁴ this people? – a little more¹⁵ and they will stone me!"¹⁶ 17:5 The LORD said to Moses, "Go over before the people;¹⁷ take with you some of the elders of Israel and

6 tn Here the construction uses a genitive after the infinitive construct for the subject: "there was no water for the drinking of the people" (GKC 353-54 §115.c).

7 tn The verb *vayyarev* (יָרִיב) is from the root *riv* (רִיב); it forms the basis of the name "Meribah." The word means "strive, quarrel, be in contention" and even "litigation." A translation "quarrel" does not appear to capture the magnitude of what is being done here. The people have a legal dispute – they are contending with Moses as if bringing a lawsuit.

8 tn The imperfect tense with the *vav* (ו) follows the imperative, and so it carries the nuance of the logical sequence, showing purpose or result. This may be expressed in English as "give us water so that we may drink," but more simply with the English infinitive, "give us water to drink."

sn One wonders if the people thought that Moses and Aaron had water and were withholding it from the people, or whether Moses was able to get it on demand. The people should have come to Moses to ask him to pray to God for water, but their action led Moses to say that they had challenged God (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 476).

9 tn In this case and in the next clause the imperfect tenses are to be taken as progressive imperfects – the action is in progress.

10 tn The verb *nasah* (נָסָה) means "to test, tempt, try, prove." It can be used of people simply trying to do something that they are not sure of (such as David trying on Saul's armor), or of God testing people to see if they will obey (as in testing Abraham, Gen 22:1), or of people challenging others (as in the Queen of Sheba coming to test Solomon), and of the people in the desert in rebellion putting God to the test. By doubting that God was truly in their midst, and demanding that he demonstrate his presence, they tested him to see if he would act. There are times when "proving" God is correct and required, but that is done by faith (as with Gideon); when it is done out of unbelief, then it is an act of disloyalty.

11 tn The verbs and the pronouns in this verse are in the singular because "the people" is singular in form.

12 tn The demonstrative pronoun is used as the enclitic form for special emphasis in the question; it literally says, "why is this you have brought us up?" (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 24, §118).

13 sn Their words deny God the credit for bringing them out of Egypt, impugn the integrity of Moses and God by accusing them of bringing the people out here to die, and show a lack of faith in God's ability to provide for them.

14 tn The preposition *lamed* (ל) is here specification, meaning "with respect to" (see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 49, §273).

15 tn Or "they are almost ready to stone me."

16 tn The perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) consecutive almost develops an independent force; this is true in sentences where it follows an expression of time, as here (see GKC 334 §112.x).

17 tn "Pass over before" indicates that Moses is the leader who goes first, and the people follow him. In other words, *lifney* (לִפְנֵי) indicates time and not place here (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 477-78).

take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile and go. 17:6 I will be standing¹ before you there on² the rock in Horeb, and you will strike³ the rock, and water will come out of it so that the people may drink.⁴ And Moses did so in plain view⁵ of the elders of Israel.

17:7 He called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contending of the Israelites and because of their testing the LORD,⁶ saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

Victory over the Amalekites

17:8⁷ Amalek came⁸ and attacked⁹ Israel in Rephidim. 17:9 So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose some of our¹⁰ men and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.”

17:10 So Joshua fought against Amalek just as Moses had instructed him;¹¹ and Moses and Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 17:11 Whenever Moses would raise his hands,¹² then Israel prevailed, but whenever he would rest¹³ his hands, then Amalek prevailed. 17:12 When¹⁴ the hands of Moses became heavy,¹⁵ they took a stone and put it under him, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side and one on the other,¹⁶ and so his hands were steady¹⁷ until the sun went down. 17:13 So

¹ tn The construction uses הֵנִי עֹמֵד (hinni 'omed) to express the *futur instans* or imminent future of the verb: “I am going to be standing.”

sn The reader has many questions when studying this passage – why water from a rock, why Horeb, why strike the rock when later only speak to it, why recall the Nile miracles, etc. B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 479-80) says that all these are answered when it is recalled that they were putting God to the test. So water from the rock, the most impossible thing, cleared up the question of his power. Doing it at Horeb was significant because there Moses was called and told he would bring them to this place. Since they had doubted God was in their midst, he would not do this miracle in the camp, but would have Moses lead the elders out to Horeb. If people doubt God is in their midst, then he will choose not to be in their midst. And striking the rock recalled striking the Nile; there it brought death to Egypt, but here it brought life to Israel. There could be little further doubting that God was with them and able to provide for them.

² tn Or “by” (NIV, NLT).

³ tn The form is a Hiphil perfect with the vav (ו) consecutive; it follows the future nuance of the participle and so is equivalent to an imperfect tense nuance of instruction.

⁴ tn These two verbs are also perfect tenses with vav (ו) consecutive: “and [water] will go out...and [the people] will drink.” But the second verb is clearly the intent or the result of the water gushing from the rock, and so it may be subordinated.

sn The presence of Yahweh at this rock enabled Paul to develop a midrashic lesson, an analogical application: Christ was present with Israel to provide water for them in the wilderness. So this was a Christophany. But Paul takes it a step further to equate the rock with Christ, for just as it was struck to produce water, so Christ would be struck to produce rivers of living water. The provision of bread to eat and water to drink provided for Paul a ready analogy to the provisions of Christ in the gospel (1 Cor 10:4).

⁵ tn Heb “in the eyes of.”

⁶ sn The name Massah (מַסָּה, *massah*) means “Proving”; it is derived from the verb “test, prove, try.” And the name Meribah (מֵרִיבָה, *merivah*) means “Strife”; it is related to the verb “to strive, quarrel, contend.” The choice of these names for the place would serve to remind Israel for all time of this failure with God. God wanted this and all subsequent generations to know how unbelief challenges God. And yet, he gave them water. So in spite of their failure, he remained faithful to his promises. The incident became proverbial, for it is the warning in Ps 95:7-8, which is quoted in Heb 3:15: “Oh, that today you would listen as he speaks! Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of testing in the wilderness. There your fathers tested me and tried me, and they saw my works for forty years.” The lesson is clear enough: to persist in this kind of unbelief could only result in the loss of divine blessing. Or, to put it another way, if they refused to believe in the power of God, they would wander powerless in the wilderness. They had every reason to believe, but they did not. (Note that this does not mean they are unbelievers, only that they would not take God at his word.)

⁷ sn This short passage gives the first account of Israel's holy wars. The war effort and Moses' holding up his hands go side by side until the victory is won and commemorated. Many have used this as an example of intercessory prayer – but the passage makes no such mention. In Exodus so far the staff of God is the token of the power of God; when Moses used it, God demonstrated his power. To use the staff of God was to say that God did it; to fight without the staff was to face defeat. Using the staff of God was a way of submitting to and depending on the power of God in all areas of life. The first part of the story reports the attack and the preparation for the battle (8,9). The second part describes the battle and its outcome (10-13). The final section is the preservation of this event in the memory of Israel (14-16).

⁸ tn Heb “and Amalek came”; NIV, NCV, TEV, CEV “the Amalekites.”

⁹ tn Or “fought with.”

¹⁰ tn This could be rendered literally “choose men for us.” But the *lamed* (ל) preposition probably indicates possession, “our men,” and the fact that Joshua was to choose from Israel, as well as the fact that there is no article on “men,” indicates he was to select some to fight.

¹¹ tn The line in Hebrew reads literally: And Joshua did as Moses had said to him, to fight with Amalek. The infinitive construct is expegetical, explaining what Joshua did that was in compliance with Moses' words.

¹² tn The two verbs in the temporal clauses are by הַיְהִי כַאֲשֶׁר (v^h *hayya ka'asher*, “as long as” or, “and it was that whenever”). This indicates that the two imperfect tenses should be given a frequentative translation, probably a customary imperfect.

¹³ tn Or “lower.”

¹⁴ tn Literally “now the hands of Moses,” the disjunctive vav (ו) introduces a circumstantial clause here – of time.

¹⁵ tn The term used here is the adjective כְּבֵדִים (*kevedim*). It means “heavy,” but in this context the idea is more that of being tired. This is the important word that was used in the plague stories: when the heart of Pharaoh was hard, then the Israelites did not gain their freedom or victory. Likewise here, when the staff was lowered because Moses' hands were “heavy,” Israel started to lose.

¹⁶ tn Heb “from this, one, and from this, one.”

¹⁷ tn The word “steady” is אָמֵן (‘*emuna*) from the root אָמַן (‘*aman*). The word usually means “faithfulness.” Here is a good illustration of the basic idea of the word – firm, steady, reliable, dependable. There may be a *double entendre* here; on the one hand it simply says that his hands were staying so that Israel might win, but on the other hand it is portraying Moses as steady, firm, reliable, faithful. The point is that whatever God commissioned as the means or agency of power – to Moses a staff, to the Christians the Spirit – the people of God had to know that the victory came from God alone.

Joshua destroyed¹ Amalek and his army² with the sword.³

17:14 The LORD said to Moses, “Write this as a memorial in the⁴ book, and rehearse⁵ it in Joshua’s hearing;⁶ for I will surely wipe out⁷ the remembrance⁸ of Amalek from under heaven. **17:15** Moses built an altar, and he called it “The LORD is my Banner,”⁹ **17:16** for he said, “For a hand was lifted up to the throne of the LORD¹⁰ – that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”¹¹

¹ **tn** The verb means “disabled, weakened, prostrated.” It is used a couple of times in the Bible to describe how man dies and is powerless (see Job 14:10; Isa 14:12).

² **tn** Or “people.”

³ **tn** *Heb* “mouth of the sword.” It means as the sword devoirs – without quarter (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 159).

⁴ **tn** The presence of the article does not mean that he was to write this in a book that was existing now, but in one dedicated to this purpose (book, meaning scroll). See GKC 408 §126.s.

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew word is “place,” meaning that the events were to be impressed on Joshua.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “in the ears of Joshua.” The account should be read to Joshua.

⁷ **tn** The construction uses the infinitive absolute and the imperfect tense to stress the resolution of Yahweh to destroy Amalek. The verb *מָחָה* (*makhah*) is often translated “blot out” – but that is not a very satisfactory image, since it would not remove completely what is the object. “Erase, erase, scrape off” (as in a palimpsest, a manuscript that is scraped clean so it can be reused) is a more accurate image.

⁸ **sn** This would seem to be defeated by the preceding statement that the events would be written in a book for a memorial. If this war is recorded, then the Amalekites would be remembered. But here God was going to wipe out the memory of them. But the idea of removing the memory of a people is an idiom for destroying them – they will have no posterity and no lasting heritage.

⁹ **sn** *Heb* “Yahweh-nissi” (so NAB), which means “Yahweh is my banner.” Note that when Israel murmured and failed God, the name commemorated the incident or the outcome of their failure. When they were blessed with success, the naming praised God. Here the holding up of the staff of God was preserved in the name for the altar – God gave them the victory.

¹⁰ **tn** The line here is very difficult. The Hebrew text has *כִּי יָדָהּ* (*ki yad 'al kes yah*, “for a hand on the throne of Yah”). If the word is “throne” (and it is not usually spelled like this), then it would mean Moses’ hand was extended to the throne of God, showing either intercession or source of power. It could not be turned to mean that the hand of Yah was taking an oath to destroy the Amalekites. The LXX took the same letters, but apparently saw the last four (כִּי) as a verbal form; it reads “with a secret hand.” Most scholars have simply assumed that the text is wrong, and כִּי should be emended to נָסַח (*nes*) to fit the name, for this is the pattern of naming in the OT with popular etymologies – some motif of the name must be found in the sentiment. This would then read, “My hand on the banner of Yah.” It would be an expression signifying that the banner, the staff of God, should ever be ready at hand when the Israelites fight the Amalekites again.

¹¹ **sn** The message of this short narrative, then, concerns the power of God to protect his people. The account includes the difficulty, the victory, and the commemoration. The victory must be retained in memory by the commemoration. So the expositional idea could focus on that: The people of God must recognize (both for engaging in warfare and for praise afterward) that victory comes only with the power of God. In the NT the issue is even more urgent, because the warfare is spiritual – believers do not wrestle against flesh and blood. So only God’s power will bring victory.

The Advice of Jethro

18:1¹² Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses’ father-in-law, heard about all that God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, that¹³ the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt.¹⁴

18:2 Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, took Moses’ wife Zipporah after he had sent her back, **18:3** and her two sons, one of whom was named Gershom (for Moses¹⁵ had said, “I have been a foreigner in a foreign land”), **18:4** and the other Eliezer (for Moses had said,¹⁶ “The God of my father has been my help¹⁷ and delivered¹⁸ me from the sword of Pharaoh”).

18:5 Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, together with Moses’¹⁹ sons and his wife, came to Moses in the desert where he was camping by²⁰ the

¹² **sn** This chapter forms the transition to the Law. There has been the deliverance, the testing passages, the provision in the wilderness, and the warfare. Any God who can do all this for his people deserves their allegiance. In chap. 18 the Lawgiver is giving advice, using laws and rulings, but then he is given advice to organize the elders to assist. Thus, when the Law is fully revealed, a system will be in place to administer it. The point of the passage is that a great leader humbly accepts advice from other godly believers to delegate responsibility. He does not try to do it all himself; God does not want one individual to do it all. The chapter has three parts: vv. 1-12 tell how Jethro heard and came and worshiped and blessed; vv. 13-23 have the advice of Jethro, and then vv. 24-27 tell how Moses implemented the plan and Jethro went home. See further E. J. Runicions, “Exodus Motifs in 1 Samuel 7 and 8,” *EvQ* 52 (1980): 130-31; and also see for another idea T. C. Butler, “An Anti-Moses Tradition,” *JSOT* 12 (1979): 9-15.

¹³ **tn** This clause beginning with *כי* (*ki*) answers the question of what Jethro had heard; it provides a second, explanatory noun clause that is the object of the verb – “he heard (1) all that God had done... (2) that he had brought....” See R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 81, §490.

¹⁴ **sn** This is an important report that Jethro has heard, for the claim of God that he brought Israel out of bondage in Egypt will be the foundation of the covenant stipulations (Exod 20).

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity (also in the following verse).

¹⁶ **tn** The referent (Moses) and the verb have been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁷ **tn** Now is given the etymological explanation of the name of Moses’ other son, Eliezer (*אֱלִיעֶזֶר*, *’eli’ezer*), which means “my God is a help.” The sentiment that explains this name is *אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי בִנְעָזִיר* (*’elohē ’avī bē’ezri*, “the God of my father is my help”). The preposition in the sentiment is the *bet* (ב) *essentiae* (giving the essence – see GKC 379 §119.i). Not mentioned earlier, the name has become even more appropriate now that God has delivered Moses from Pharaoh again. The word for “help” is a common word in the Bible, first introduced as a description of the woman in the Garden. It means to do for someone what he or she cannot do for himself or herself. Samuel raised the “stone of help” (Ebenezer) when Yahweh helped Israel win the battle (1 Sam 7:12).

¹⁸ **sn** The verb “delivered” is an important motif in this chapter (see its use in vv. 8, 9, and 10 with reference to Pharaoh).

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “his”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁰ **tn** This is an adverbial accusative that defines the place (see GKC 373-74 §118.g).

mountain of God.¹ 18:6 He said² to Moses, “I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you, along with your wife and her two sons with her.” 18:7 Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him,³ they each asked about the other’s welfare, and then they went into the tent. 18:8 Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to Egypt for Israel’s sake, and all the hardship⁴ that had come on them⁵ along the way, and how⁶ the LORD had delivered them.

18:9 Jethro rejoiced⁷ because of all the good that the LORD had done for Israel, whom he had delivered from the hand of Egypt. 18:10 Jethro said, “Blessed⁸ be the LORD who has delivered you from the hand of Egypt, and from the hand of Pharaoh, who has delivered the people from the Egyptians’ control!⁹ 18:11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods, for in the thing in which they dealt proudly against them he has destroyed them.”¹⁰ 18:12 Then Jethro,

Moses’ father-in-law, brought¹¹ a burnt offering and sacrifices for God,¹² and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat food¹³ with the father-in-law of Moses before God.

18:13 On the next day¹⁴ Moses sat to judge¹⁵ the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning until evening. 18:14 When Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, “What is this¹⁶ that you are doing for the people?¹⁷ Why are you sitting by yourself, and all the people stand around you from morning until evening?”

18:15 Moses said to his father-in-law, “Because the people come to me to inquire¹⁸ of God. 18:16 When they have a dispute,¹⁹ it comes to me and I decide²⁰ between a man and his neighbor, and I make known the decrees of God and his laws.”²¹

¹ sn The mountain of God is Horeb, and so the desert here must be the Sinai desert by it. But chap. 19 suggests that they left Rephidim to go the 24 miles to Sinai. It may be that this chapter fits in chronologically after the move to Sinai, but was placed here thematically. W. C. Kaiser defends the present location of the story by responding to other reasons for the change given by Lightfoot, but does not deal with the travel locations (W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:411).

² sn This verse may seem out of place, since the report has already been given that they came to the desert. It begins to provide details of the event that the previous verse summarizes. The announcement in verse 6 may have come in advance by means of a messenger or at the time of arrival, either of which would fit with the attention to formal greetings in verse 7. This would suit a meeting between two important men; the status of Moses has changed. The LXX solves the problem by taking the pronoun “I” as the participle “behold” and reads it this way: “one said to Moses, ‘Behold, your father-in-law has come....’”

³ sn This is more than polite oriental custom. Jethro was Moses’ benefactor, father-in-law, and a priest. He paid much respect to him. Now he could invite Jethro into his home (see B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 496).

⁴ tn A rare word, “weariness” of the hardships.

⁵ tn Heb “found them.”

⁶ tn Heb “how” has been supplied.

⁷ tn The word *khada* (*khada*) is rare, occurring only in Job 3:6 and Ps 21:6, although it is common in Aramaic. The LXX translated it “he shuddered.” U. Cassuto suggests that that rendering was based on the midrashic interpretation in *b. Sanhedrin* 94b, “he felt cuts in his body” – a wordplay on the verb (*Exodus*, 215-16).

⁸ tn This is a common form of praise. The verb *barukh* (*barukh*) is the Qal passive participle of the verb. Here must be supplied a jussive, making this participle the predicate: “May Yahweh be blessed.” The verb essentially means “to enrich”; in praise it would mean that he would be enriched by the praises of the people.

⁹ tn Heb “from under the hand of the Egyptians.”

¹⁰ tn The end of this sentence seems not to have been finished, or it is very elliptical. In the present translation the phrase “he has destroyed them” is supplied. Others take the last prepositional phrase to be the completion and supply only a verb: “[he was] above them.” U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 216) takes the word “gods” to be the subject of the verb “act proudly,” giving the sense of “precisely (כי, *ki*) in respect of these things of which the gods of Egypt boasted – He is greater than they (גְּיָהֵם, *gēyahēm*).” He suggests rendering the clause, “excelling them in the very things to which they laid claim.”

¹¹ tn The verb is “and he took” (cf. KJV, ASV, NASB). It must have the sense of getting the animals for the sacrifice. The Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate have “offered.” But Cody argues because of the precise wording in the text Jethro did not offer the sacrifices but received them (A. Cody, “Exodus 18.12: Jethro Accepts a Covenant with the Israelites,” *Bib* 49 [1968]: 159-61).

¹² sn Jethro brought offerings as if he were the one who had been delivered. The “burnt offering” is singular, to honor God first. The other sacrifices were intended for the invited guests to eat (a forerunner of the peace offering). See B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 498.

¹³ tn The word *lekhem* (*lekhem*) here means the sacrifice and all the foods that were offered with it. The eating before God was part of covenantal ritual, for it signified that they were in communion with the Deity, and with one another.

¹⁴ tn Heb “and it was/happened on the morrow.”

¹⁵ sn This is a simple summary of the function of Moses on this particular day. He did not necessarily do this every day, but it was time now to do it. The people would come to solve their difficulties or to hear instruction from Moses on decisions to be made. The tradition of “sitting in Moses’ seat” is drawn from this passage.

¹⁶ tn Heb “what is this thing.”

¹⁷ sn This question, “what are you doing for the people,” is qualified by the next question. Sitting alone all day and the people standing around all day showed that Moses was exhibiting too much care for the people – he could not do this.

¹⁸ tn The form is *līdrash* (*līdrash*), the Qal infinitive construct giving the purpose. To inquire of God would be to seek God’s will on a matter, to obtain a legal decision on a matter, or to settle a dispute. As a judge Moses is speaking for God, but as the servant of Yahweh Moses’ words will be God’s words. The psalms would later describe judges as “gods” because they made the right decisions based on God’s Law.

¹⁹ tn Or “thing,” “matter,” “issue.”

²⁰ tn The verb *shafat* (*shafat*) means “to judge”; more specifically, it means to make a decision as an arbiter or umpire. When people brought issues to him, Moses decided between them. In the section of laws in Exodus after the Ten Commandments come the decisions, the *mishppatim* (*mishppatim*).

²¹ tn The “decrees” or “statutes” were definite rules, stereotyped and permanent; the “laws” were directives or pronouncements given when situations arose. S. R. Driver suggests this is another reason why this event might have taken place after Yahweh had given laws on the mountain (*Exodus*, 165).

18:17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What¹ you are doing is not good! 18:18 You will surely wear out,² both you and these people who are with you, for this is too³ heavy a burden⁴ for you; you are not able to do it by yourself. 18:19 Now listen to me,⁵ I will give you advice, and may God be with you: You be a representative for the people to God,⁶ and you bring⁷ their disputes⁸ to God; 18:20 warn⁹ them of the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they must walk¹⁰ and the work they must do.¹¹ 18:21 But you choose¹² from the people capable men,¹³ God-fearing,¹⁴ men of truth,¹⁵ those who hate bribes,¹⁶ and put

them over the people¹⁷ as rulers¹⁸ of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. 18:22 They will judge¹⁹ the people under normal circumstances,²⁰ and every difficult case²¹ they will bring to you, but every small case²² they themselves will judge, so that²³ you may make it easier for yourself,²⁴ and they will bear the burden²⁵ with you. 18:23 If you do this thing, and God so commands you,²⁶ then you will be able²⁷ to endure,²⁸ and all these people²⁹ will be able to go³⁰ home³¹ satisfied."³²

18:24 Moses listened to³³ his father-in-law and did everything he had said. 18:25 Moses chose capable men from all Israel, and he made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. 18:26 They judged the people under normal circumstances; the difficult cases they would

¹ tn Heb "the thing."

² tn The verb means "to fall and fade" as a leaf (Ps 1:3). In Ps 18:45 it is used figuratively of foes fading away, failing in strength and courage (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 166). Here the infinitive absolute construction heightens the meaning.

³ tn Gesenius lists the specialized use of the comparative *min* (ב) where with an adjective the thought expressed is that the quality is too difficult for the attainment of a particular aim (GKC 430 §133.c).

⁴ tn Here "a burden" has been supplied.

⁵ tn Heb "hear my voice."

⁶ tn The line reads "Be you to the people before God." He is to be their representative before God. This is introducing the aspect of the work that only Moses could do, what he has been doing. He is to be before God for the people, to pray for them, to appeal on their behalf. Jethro is essentially saying, I understand that you cannot delegate this to anyone else, so continue doing it (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 219-20).

⁷ tn The form is the perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) consecutive; following the imperative it will be instruction as well. Since the imperative preceding this had the idea of "continue to be" as you are, this too has that force.

⁸ tn Heb "words"; KJV, ASV "the causes"; NRSV "cases"; NLT "questions."

⁹ tn The perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) continues the sequence of instruction for Moses. He alone was to be the mediator, to guide them in the religious and moral instruction.

¹⁰ tn The verb and its following prepositional phrase form a relative clause, modifying "the way." The imperfect tense should be given the nuance of obligatory imperfect – it is the way they must walk.

¹¹ tn This last part is parallel to the preceding: "work" is also a direct object of the verb "make known," and the relative clause that qualifies it also uses an obligatory imperfect.

¹² tn The construction uses the independent pronoun for emphasis, and then the imperfect tense "see" (ראה, *khazah*) – "and you will see from all...." Both in Hebrew and Ugaritic expressions of "seeing" are used in the sense of choosing (Gen 41:33). See U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 220.

¹³ tn The expression is אנשי חַיִּיל (*anshe khayil*, "capable men"). The attributive genitive is the word used in expressions like "mighty man of valor." The word describes these men as respected, influential, powerful people, those looked up to by the community as leaders, and those who will have the needs of the community in mind.

¹⁴ tn The description "fearers of God" uses an objective genitive. It describes them as devout, worshipful, obedient servants of God.

¹⁵ tn The expression "men of truth" (אנשי אֱמֶת, *anshe'emet*) indicates that these men must be seekers of truth, who know that the task of a judge is to give true judgment (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 220). The word "truth" includes the ideas of faithfulness or reliability, as well as factuality itself. It could be understood to mean "truthful men," men whose word is reliable and true.

¹⁶ tn Heb "haters of bribes." Here is another objective genitive, one that refers to unjust gain. To hate unjust gain is to reject and refuse it. Their decisions will not be swayed by greed.

¹⁷ tn Heb "over them"; the referent (the people) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁸ sn It is not clear how this structure would work in a judicial setting. The language of "captains of thousands," etc., is used more for military ranks. There must have been more detailed instruction involved here, for each Israelite would have come under four leaders with this arrangement, and perhaps difficult cases would be sent to the next level. But since the task of these men would also involve instruction and guidance, the breakdown would be very useful. Deut 1:9, 13 suggest that the choice of these people was not simply Moses' alone.

¹⁹ tn The form is the perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) consecutive, making it equivalent to the imperfect of instruction in the preceding verse.

²⁰ tn Heb "in every time," meaning "in all normal cases" or "under normal circumstances." The same phrase occurs in v. 26.

²¹ tn Heb "great thing."

²² tn Heb "thing."

²³ tn The *vav* here shows the result or the purpose of the instructions given.

²⁴ tn The expression וְהָקַל מֵעַלְיָהּ (v^h *haqel me'aleykha*) means literally "and make it light off yourself." The word plays against the word for "heavy" used earlier – since it was a heavy or burdensome task, Moses must lighten the load.

²⁵ tn Here "the burden" has been supplied.

²⁶ tn The form is a Piel perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive; it carries the same nuance as the preceding imperfect in the conditional clause.

²⁷ tn The perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive now appears in the apodosis of the conditional sentence – "if you do this...then you will be able."

²⁸ tn Heb "to stand." B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 501) suggests that there might be a humorous side to this: "you could even do this standing up."

²⁹ tn Literally "this people."

³⁰ tn The verb is the simple imperfect, "will go," but given the sense of the passage a potential nuance seems in order.

³¹ tn Heb "his place."

³² tn Heb "in peace."

sn See further T. D. Weinsall, "The Organizational Structure Proposed by Jethro to Moses (Ex. 18:17)," *Public Administration in Israel and Abroad* 12 (1972): 9-13; and H. Reviv, "The Traditions Concerning the Inception of the Legal System in Israel: Significance and Dating," *ZAW* 94 (1982): 566-75.

³³ tn The idiom "listen to the voice of" means "obey, comply with, heed."

bring¹ to Moses, but every small case they would judge themselves.

18:27 Then Moses sent his father-in-law on his way,² and so Jethro³ went⁴ to his own land.⁵

Israel at Sinai

19:1⁶ In the third month after the Israelites went out⁷ from the land of Egypt, on the very day,⁸ they came to the Desert of Sinai. **19:2** After they journeyed⁹ from Rephidim, they came to the Desert of Sinai, and they camped in the desert; Israel camped there in front of the mountain.¹⁰

1 tn This verb and the verb in the next clause are imperfect tenses. In the past tense narrative of the verse they must be customary, describing continuous action in past time.

2 tn The verb *וַיִּשְׁלַח* (*vayshallakh*) has the same root and same stem used in the passages calling for Pharaoh to “release” Israel. Here, in a peaceful and righteous relationship, Moses sent Jethro to his home.

3 tn Heb “he”; the referent (Jethro) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

4 tn The prepositional phrase included here Gesenius classifies as a pleonastic *dativus ethicus* to give special emphasis to the significance of the occurrence in question for a particular subject (GKC 381 §119.s).

5 sn This chapter makes an excellent message on spiritual leadership of the people of God. Spiritually responsible people are to be selected to help in the work of the ministry (teaching, deciding cases, meeting needs), so that there will be peace, and so that leaders will not be exhausted. Probably capable people are more ready to do that than leaders are ready to relinquish control. But leaders have to be willing to take the risk, to entrust the task to others. Here Moses is the model of humility, receiving correction and counsel from Jethro. And Jethro is the ideal adviser, for he has no intention of remaining there to run the operation.

6 sn This chapter is essentially about mediation. The people are getting ready to meet with God, receive the Law from him, and enter into a covenant with him. All of this required mediation and preparation. Through it all, Israel will become God’s unique possession, a kingdom of priests on earth – if they comply with his Law. The chapter can be divided as follows: vv. 1-8 tell how God, Israel’s great deliverer promised to make them a kingdom of priests; this is followed by God’s declaration that Moses would be the mediator (v. 9); vv. 10-22 record instructions for Israel to prepare themselves to worship Yahweh and an account of the manifestation of Yahweh with all the phenomena; and the chapter closes with the mediation of Moses on behalf of the people (vv. 23-25). Having been redeemed from Egypt, the people will now be granted a covenant with God. See also R. E. Bee, “A Statistical Study of the Sinai Pericope,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 135 (1972): 406-21.

7 tn The construction uses the infinitive construct followed by the subjective genitive to form a temporal clause.

8 tn Heb “on this day.”

9 tn The form is a preterite with *vav* (ו) consecutive, “and they journeyed.” It is here subordinated to the next clause as a temporal clause. But since the action of this temporal clause preceded the actions recorded in v. 1, a translation of “after” will keep the sequence in order. Verse 2 adds details to the summary in v. 1.

10 sn The mountain is Mount Sinai, the mountain of God, the place where God had met and called Moses and had promised that they would be here to worship him. If this mountain is Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Sinai, then the plain in front of it would be Er-Rahah, about a mile and a half long by half a mile wide, fronting the mountain on the NW side (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 169). The plain itself is about 5000 feet above sea level. A mountain on the west side of the Arabian Peninsula has also been suggested as a possible site.

19:3 Moses¹¹ went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, “Thus you will tell the house of Jacob, and declare to the people¹² of Israel: **19:4** ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt and how I lifted you on eagles’ wings¹³ and brought you to myself.¹⁴ **19:5** And now, if you will diligently listen to me¹⁵ and keep¹⁶ my covenant, then you will be my¹⁷ special possession¹⁸ out of all the nations, for all the earth is mine, **19:6** and you will be to me¹⁹ a kingdom of priests²⁰ and a holy nation.’²¹ These

11 tn Heb “and Moses went up.”

12 tn This expression is normally translated as “Israelites” in this translation, but because in this place it is parallel to “the house of Jacob” it seemed better to offer a fuller rendering.

13 tn The figure compares the way a bird would teach its young to fly and leave the nest with the way Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt. The bird referred to could be one of several species of eagles, but more likely is the griffin-vulture. The image is that of power and love.

14 sn The language here is the language of a bridegroom bringing the bride to the chamber. This may be a deliberate allusion to another metaphor for the covenant relationship.

15 tn Heb “listen to my voice.” The construction uses the imperfect tense in the conditional clause, preceded by the infinitive absolute from the same verb. The idiom “listen to the voice of” implies obedience, not just mental awareness of sound.

16 tn The verb is a perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive; it continues the idea in the protasis of the sentence: “and [if you will] keep.”

17 tn The *lamed* preposition expresses possession here: “to me” means “my.”

18 tn The noun *סְגֻלָּה* (*s^ggullah*), which means a special possession. Israel was to be God’s special possession, but the prophets will later narrow it to the faithful remnant. All the nations belong to God, but Israel was to stand in a place of special privilege and enormous responsibility. See Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps 135:4; and Mal 3:17. See M. Greenburg, “Hebrew *s^ggulla*: Akkadian *sikiltu*,” *JAOS* 71 (1951): 172ff.

19 tn Or “for me” (NIV, NRSV), or, if the *lamed* (ל) preposition has a possessive use, “my kingdom” (so NCV).

20 tn The construction “a kingdom of priests” means that the kingdom is made up of priests. W. C. Kaiser (*“Exodus,” EBC* 2:417) offers four possible renderings of the expression: 1) apposition, viz., “kings, that is, priests”; 2) as a construct with a genitive of specification, “royal priesthood”; 3) as a construct with the genitive being the attribute, “priestly kingdom”; and 4) reading with an unexpressed “and” – “kings and priests.” He takes the latter view that they were to be kings and priests. (Other references are R. B. Y. Scott, “A Kingdom of Priests (Exodus xix. 6),” *OTS* 8 [1950]: 213-19; William L. Moran, “A Kingdom of Priests,” *The Bible in Current Catholic Thought*, 7-20). However, due to the parallelism of the next description which uses an adjective, this is probably a construct relationship. This kingdom of God will be composed of a priestly people. All the Israelites would be living wholly in God’s service and enjoying the right of access to him. And, as priests, they would have the duty of representing God to the nations, following what they perceived to be the duties of priests – proclaiming God’s word, interceding for people, and making provision for people to find God through atonement (see Deut 33:9,10).

21 tn They are also to be “a holy nation.” They are to be a nation separate and distinct from the rest of the nations. Here is another aspect of their duty. It was one thing to be God’s special possession, but to be that they had to be priestly and holy. The duties of the covenant will specify what it would mean to be a holy nation. In short, they had to keep themselves free from everything that characterized pagan people (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 171). So it is a bilateral covenant: they received special privileges but they must provide special services by the special discipline. See also H. Kruse, “Exodus 19:5 and

are the words that you will speak to the Israelites.”

19:7 So Moses came and summoned the elders of Israel. He set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him, **19:8** and all the people answered together, “All that the LORD has commanded we will do!”² So Moses brought the words of the people back to the LORD.

19:9 The LORD said to Moses, “I am going to come² to you in a dense cloud,³ so that the people may hear when I speak with you and so that they will always believe in you.”⁴ And Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

19:10 The LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and sanctify them⁵ today and tomorrow, and make them wash⁶ their clothes **19:11** and be ready for the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. **19:12** You must set boundaries⁷ for the people all around, saying, ‘Take heed⁸ to yourselves not to go up on the mountain nor touch its edge. Whoever touches the mountain will surely be put to death! **19:13** No hand will touch him⁹ – but he will surely be stoned or shot through, whether a beast or a human being;¹⁰ he must not live.’ When the

ram’s horn sounds a long blast they may¹¹ go up on the mountain.”

19:14 Then Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. **19:15** He said to the people, “Be ready for the third day. Do not go near your wives.”¹²

19:16 On¹³ the third day in the morning there was thunder and lightning and a dense¹⁴ cloud on the mountain, and the sound of a very loud¹⁵ horn;¹⁶ all the people who were in the camp trembled. **19:17** Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their place at the foot of the mountain. **19:18** Now Mount Sinai was completely covered with smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire, and its smoke went up like the smoke of a great furnace,¹⁷ and the whole mountain shook¹⁸ violently. **19:19** When the sound of the horn grew louder and louder,¹⁹ Moses was speaking²⁰ and God was answering him with a voice.²¹

19:20 The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain, and the LORD summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. **19:21** The LORD said to Moses,

the Mission of Israel,” *North East Asian Journal of Theology* 24/25 (1980): 239-42.

¹ **tn** The verb is an imperfect. The people are not being presumptuous in stating their compliance – there are several options open for the interpretation of this tense. It may be classified as having a desiderative nuance: “we are willing to do” or, “we will do.”

² **tn** The construction uses the deictic particle and the participle to express the imminent future, what God was about to do. Here is the first announcement of the theophany.

³ **tn** *Heb* “the thickness of the cloud”; KJV, ASV, NASB, NCV, TEV, CEV, NLT “in a thick cloud.”

⁴ **tn** Since “and also in you” begins the clause, the emphasis must be that the people would also trust Moses. See Exod 4:1-9, 31; 14:31.

⁵ **tn** This verb is a Piel perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive; it continues the force of the imperative preceding it. This sanctification would be accomplished by abstaining from things that would make them defiled or unclean, and then by ritual washings and ablutions.

⁶ **tn** The form is a perfect 3cpl with a *vav* (ו) consecutive. It is instructional as well, but now in the third person it is like a jussive, “let them wash, make them wash.”

⁷ **tn** The verb is a Hiphil perfect (“make borders”) with *vav* (ו) consecutive, following the sequence of instructions.

⁸ **tn** The Niphal imperative (“guard yourselves, take heed to yourselves”) is followed by two infinitives construct that provide the description of what is to be avoided – going up or touching the mountain.

⁹ **sn** There is some ambiguity here. The clause either means that no man will touch the mountain, so that if there is someone who is to be put to death he must be stoned or shot since they could not go into the mountain region to get him, or, it may mean no one is to touch the culprit who went in to the region of the mountain.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “a man.”

¹¹ **tn** The nuance here is permissive imperfect, “they may go up.” The ram’s horn would sound the blast to announce that the revelation period was over and it was permitted then to ascend the mountain.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “do not go near a woman”; NIV “Abstain from sexual relations.”

¹³ **sn** B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 537) notes that as the people were to approach him they were not to lose themselves in earthly love. Such separations prepared the people for meeting God. Sinai was like a bride, forbidden to anyone else. Abstinence was the spiritual preparation for coming into the presence of the Holy One.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and it was on.”

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “heavy” (כבד, *kaved*).

¹⁶ **tn** Literally “strong” (חזק, *khazaq*).

¹⁷ **tn** The word here is שפף (*shofar*), the normal word for “horn.” This word is used especially to announce something important in a public event (see 1 Kgs 1:34; 2 Sam 6:15). The previous word used in the context (v. 16) was יבל (*yovel*, “ram’s horn”).

¹⁸ **sn** The image is that of a large kiln, as in Gen 19:28.

¹⁹ **tn** This is the same word translated “trembled” above (v. 16).

²⁰ **tn** The active participle הולך (*holekh*) is used to add the idea of “continually” to the action of the sentence; here the trumpet became very loud – continually. See GKC 344 §113. u.

²¹ **tn** The two verbs here (“spoke” and “answered”) are imperfect tenses; they emphasize repeated action but in past time. The customary imperfect usually is translated “would” or “used to” do the action, but here continuous action in past time is meant. S. R. Driver translates it “kept speaking” and “kept answering” (*Exodus*, 172).

²² **tn** The text simply has ביקול (*bēqol*); it could mean “with a voice” or it could mean “in thunder” since “voice” was used in v. 16 for thunder. In this context it would be natural to say that the repeated thunderings were the voice of God – but how is that an answer? Deut 4:12 says that the people heard the sound of words. U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 232-33) rightly comments, “He was answering him with a loud voice so that it was possible for Moses to hear His words clearly in the midst of the storm.” He then draws a parallel from Ugaritic where it tells that one of the gods was speaking in a loud voice.

“Go down and solemnly warn¹ the people, lest they force their way through to the LORD to look, and many of them perish.² 19:22 Let the priests also, who approach the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break through³ against them.”

19:23 Moses said to the LORD, “The people are not able to come up to Mount Sinai, because you solemnly warned us,⁴ ‘Set boundaries for the mountain and set it apart.’”⁵ 19:24 The LORD said to him, “Go, get down, and come up, and Aaron with you, but do not let the priests and the people force their way through to come up to the LORD, lest he break through against them.”⁶ 19:25 So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.⁶

The Decalogue

20:1⁷ God spoke all these words:⁸

20:2 “I,⁹ the LORD, am your God,¹⁰ who brought you¹¹ from the land of Egypt, from the

And then in chap. 24 the covenant will be inaugurated. So when Israel entered into covenant with God, they entered into a theocracy by expressing their willingness to submit to his authority. The Law was the binding constitution for the nation of Israel under Yahweh their God. It was specifically given to them at a certain time and in a certain place. The Law legislated how Israel was to live in order to be blessed by God and used by him as a kingdom of priests. In the process of legislating their conduct and their ritual for worship, the Law revealed God. It revealed the holiness of Yahweh as the standard for all worship and service, and in revealing that it revealed or uncovered sin. But what the Law condemned, the Law (Leviticus) also made provision for in the laws of the sacrifice and the feasts intended for atonement. The NT teaches that the Law was good, and perfect, and holy. But it also teaches that Christ was the end (goal) of the Law, that it ultimately led to him. It was a pedagogue, Paul said, to bring people to Christ. And when the fulfillment of the promise came in him, believers were not to go back under the Law. What this means for Christians is that what the Law of Israel revealed about God and his will is timeless and still authoritative over faith and conduct, but what the Law regulated for Israel in their existence as the people of God has been done away with in Christ. The Ten Commandments reveal the essence of the Law; the ten for the most part are reiterated in the NT because they reflect the holy and righteous nature of God. The NT often raises them to a higher standard, to guard the spirit of the Law as well as the letter.

⁸ sn The Bible makes it clear that the Law was the revelation of God at Mount Sinai. And yet study has shown that the law code's form follows the literary pattern of covenant codes in the Late Bronze Age, notably the Hittite codes. The point of such codes is that all the covenant stipulations are appropriate because of the wonderful things that the sovereign has done for the people. God, in using a well-known literary form, was both drawing on the people's knowledge of such to impress their duties on them, as well as putting new wine into old wineskins. The whole nature of God's code was on a much higher level. For this general structure, see M. G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*. For the Ten Commandments specifically, see J. J. Stamm and M. E. Andrew, *The Ten Commandments in Recent Research* (SBT). See also some of the general articles: M. Barrett, “God's Moral Standard: An Examination of the Decalogue,” *BV* 12 (1978): 34-40; C. J. H. Wright, “The Israelite Household and the Decalogue: The Social Background and Significance of Some Commandments,” *TynBul* 30 (1979): 101-24; J. D. Levenson, “The Theologies of Commandment in Biblical Israel,” *HTR* 73 (1980): 17-33; M. B. Cohen and D. B. Friedman, “The Dual Accentuation of the Ten Commandments,” *Masoretic Studies* 1 (1974): 7-190; D. Skinner, “Some Major Themes of Exodus,” *Mid-America Theological Journal* 1 (1977): 31-42; M. Tate, “The Legal Traditions of the Book of Exodus,” *RevExp* 74 (1977): 483-509; E. C. Smith, “The Ten Commandments in Today's Permissive Society: A Principle Approach,” *SwJT* 20 (1977): 42-58; and D. W. Buck, “Exodus 20:1-17,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 16 (1982): 65-75.

⁹ sn The revelation of Yahweh here begins with the personal pronoun. “I” – a person, a living personality, not an object or a mere thought. This enabled him to address “you” – Israel, and all his people, making the binding stipulations for them to conform to his will (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 544).

¹⁰ tn Most English translations have “I am Yahweh your God.” But the preceding chapters have again and again demonstrated how he made himself known to them. Now, the emphasis is on “I am your God” – and what that would mean in their lives.

¹¹ tn The suffix on the verb is second masculine singular. It is this person that will be used throughout the commandments for the whole nation. God addresses them all as his people, but he addresses them individually for their obedience. The masculine form is not, thereby, intended to exclude women.

¹ tn The imperative הִנְדִּיר (*ha'nd*) means “charge” them – put them under oath, or solemnly warn them. God wished to ensure that the people would not force their way past the barriers that had been set out.

² tn Heb “and fall”; NAB “be struck down.”

³ tn The verb פָּרַץ (*parats*) is the imperfect tense from פָּרַץ (*parats*, “to make a breach, to break through”). The image of Yahweh breaking forth on them means “work destruction” (see 2 Sam 6:8; S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 174).

⁴ tn The construction is emphatic: “because you – you solemnly warned us.” Moses' response to God is to ask how they would break through when God had already charged them not to. God knew them better than Moses did.

⁵ tn Heb “sanctify it.”

⁶ sn The passage has many themes and emphases that could be developed in exposition. It could serve for meditation: the theology drawn from the three parts could be subordinated to the theme of holiness: God is holy, therefore adhere to his word for service, approach him through a mediator, and adore him in purity and fearful reverence. A developed outline for the exposition could be: I. If the people of God will obey him, they will be privileged to serve in a unique way (1-8); II. If the people of God are to obey, they must be convinced of the divine source of their commands (9); and finally, III. If the people of God are convinced of the divine approval of their mediator, and the divine source of their instructions, they must sanctify themselves before him (10-25). In sum, the manifestation of the holiness of Yahweh is the reason for sanctification and worship. The correlation is to be made through 1 Peter 2 to the church. The Church is a kingdom of priests; it is to obey the Word of God. What is the motivation for this? Their mediator is Jesus Christ; he has the approval of the Father and manifests the glory of God to his own; and he declares the purpose of their calling is to display his glory. God's people are to abstain from sin so that pagans can see their good works and glorify God.

⁷ sn This chapter is the heart of the Law of Israel, and as such is well known throughout the world. There is so much literature on it that it is almost impossible to say anything briefly and do justice to the subject. But the exposition of the book must point out that this is the charter of the new nation of Israel. These ten commands (words) form the preamble; they will be followed by the decisions (judgments).

house of slavery.¹

20:3 “You shall have no² other gods before me.”³

20:4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image⁴ or any likeness⁵ of anything⁶ that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water below.⁷ **20:5** You shall not bow down to them or serve them,⁸ for I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous⁹ God, responding

¹ **tn** *Heb* “the house of slaves” meaning “the land of slavery.”

sn By this announcement Yahweh declared what he had done for Israel by freeing them from slavery. Now they are free to serve him. He has a claim on them for gratitude and obedience. But this will not be a covenant of cruel slavery and oppression; it is a covenant of love, as God is saying “I am yours, and you are mine.” This was the sovereign Lord of creation and of history speaking, declaring that he was their savior.

2 tn The possession is expressed here by the use of the *lamed* (ל) preposition and the verb “to be”: לֹא יִיְהִי־לָּךְ (lo’ yihyeh *l’kha*, “there will not be to you”). The negative with the imperfect expresses the emphatic prohibition; it is best reflected with “you will not” and has the strongest expectation of obedience (see GKC 317 §107.o). As an additional way of looking at this line, U. Cassuto suggests that the verb is in the singular in order to say that they could not have even one other god, and the word “gods” is plural to include any gods (*Exodus*, 241).

3 tn The expression עֲלֵי־פָנַי (*al-panay*) has several possible interpretations. S. R. Driver suggests “in front of me,” meaning obliging me to behold them, and also giving a prominence above me (*Exodus*, 193-94). W. F. Albright rendered it “You shall not prefer other gods to me” (*From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 297, n. 29). B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 546) illustrates it with marriage: the wife could belong to only one man while every other man was “another man.” They continued to exist but were not available to her. The point is clear from the Law, regardless of the specific way the prepositional phrase is rendered. God demands absolute allegiance, to the exclusion of all other deities. The preposition may imply some antagonism, for false gods would be opposed to Yahweh. U. Cassuto adds that God was in effect saying that anytime Israel turned to a false god they had to know that the LORD was there – it is always in his presence, or before him (*Exodus*, 241).

4 tn A פֶּסֶל (*pesel*) is an image that was carved out of wood or stone. The Law was concerned with a statue that would be made for the purpose of worship, an idol to be venerated, and not any ordinary statue.

5 tn The word תְּבוּנָה (*ṭṭunah*) refers to the mental pattern from which the פֶּסֶל (*pesel*) is constructed; it is a real or imagined resemblance. If this is to stand as a second object to the verb, then the verb itself takes a slightly different nuance here. It would convey “you shall not make an image, neither shall you conceive a form” for worship (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 547). Some simply make the second word qualify the first: “you shall not make an idol in the form of...” (NIV).

⁶ **tn** Here the phrase “of anything” has been supplied.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “under the earth” (so KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV).

8 tn The combination of these two verbs customarily refers to the worship of pagan deities (e.g., Deut 17:3; 30:17; Jer 8:2; see J. J. Stamm and M. E. Andrew, *The Ten Commandments in Recent Research* [SBT], 86). The first verb is לֹא תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה (lo’ tishṭakhaveh), now to be classified as a *hishtaphel* imperfect from חָוָה (*khavah*; BDB 1005 s.v. חָוָה), “to cause oneself to be low to the ground.” It is used of the true worship of God as well. The second verb is וְלֹא תַעֲבֹד (u’lo’ to’ovdem). The two could be taken as a hendiadys: “you will not prostrate yourself to serve them.” In an interesting side comment U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 242) offers an explanation of the spelling of the second verb: he suggests that it was spelled with the *qamets khatuf* vowel to show contempt for pagan worship, as if their conduct does not even warrant a correct spelling of the word “serve.” Gesenius says that the forms like this are anomalous, but he wonders if they were pointed as if the verb was a Hophal with the meaning “you shall not allow yourself to be brought to worship them” (GKC 161 §60.b). But this is unlikely.

⁹ **sn** The word “jealous” is the same word often translated

to¹⁰ the transgression of fathers by dealing with children to the third and fourth generations¹¹ of those who reject me,¹² **20:6** and showing covenant faithfulness¹³ to a thousand generations¹⁴ of those who love me and keep my commandments.

20:7 “You shall not take¹⁵ the name of the LORD your God in vain,¹⁶ for the LORD will not

“zeal” or “zealous.” The word describes a passionate intensity to protect or defend something that is jeopardized. The word can also have the sense of “envy,” but in that case the object is out of bounds. God’s zeal or jealousy is to protect his people or his institutions or his honor. Yahweh’s honor is bound up with the life of his people.

10 tn Verses 5 and 6 are very concise, and the word פָּקַד (*paqad*) is difficult to translate. Often rendered “visiting,” it might here be rendered “dealing with” in a negative sense or “punishing,” but it describes positive attention in 13:19. When used of God, it essentially means that God intervenes in the lives of people for blessing or for cursing. Some would simply translate the participle here as “punishing” the children for the sins of the fathers (cf. Lev 18:25; Isa 26:21; Jer 29:32; 36:31; Hos 1:4; Amos 3:2). That is workable, but may not say enough. The verse may indicate that those who hate Yahweh and do not keep his commandments will repeat the sins their fathers committed and suffer for them. Deut 24:16 says that individuals will die for their own sins and not their father’s sins (see also Deut 7:10 and Ezek 18). It may have more to do with patterns of sin being repeated from generation to generation; if the sin and the guilt were not fully developed in the one generation, then left unchecked they would develop and continue in the next. But it may also indicate that the effects of the sins of the fathers will be experienced in the following generations, especially in the case of Israel as a national entity (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 243). God is showing here that his ethical character is displayed in how he deals with sin and righteousness, all of which he describes as giving strong motivation for loyalty to him and for avoiding idolatry. There is a justice at work in the dealings of God that is not present in the pagan world.

11 tn The Hebrew word for “generations” is not found in v. 5 or 6. The numbers are short for a longer expression, which is understood as part of the description of the children already mentioned (see Deut 7:9, where “generation” [דֹר, *dor*] is present and more necessary, since “children” have not been mentioned).

12 tn This is an important qualification to the principle. The word rendered “reject” is often translated “hate” and carries with it the idea of defiantly rejecting and opposing God and his word. Such people are doomed to carry on the sins of their ancestors and bear guilt with them.

13 tn Literally “doing loyal love” (עֲשֵׂה חֶסֶד, *’oseh khased*). The noun refers to God’s covenant loyalty, his faithful love to those who belong to him. These are members of the covenant, recipients of grace, the people of God, whom God will preserve and protect from evil and its effects.

14 tn *Heb* “to thousands” or “to thousandth.” After “tenth,” Hebrew uses cardinal numbers for ordinals also. This statement is the antithesis of the preceding line. The “thousands” or “thousandth [generation]” are those who love Yahweh and keep his commands. These are descendants from the righteous, and even associates with them, who benefit from the mercy that God extends to his people. S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 195) says that this passage teaches that God’s mercy transcends his wrath; in his providence the beneficial consequences of a life of goodness extend indefinitely further than the retribution that is the penalty for persisting in sin. To say that God’s loyal love extends to thousands of generations or the thousandth generation is parallel to saying that it endures forever (Ps. 118). See also Exod 34:7; Deut 5:10; 7:9; Ps 18:50; Jer 32:18.

15 tn Or “use” (NCV, TEV); NIV, CEV, NLT “misuse”; NRSV “make wrongful use of.”

16 tn שָׁוָא (*shav’*), “vain” describes “unreality.” The command prohibits use of the name for any idle, frivolous, or insincere purpose (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 196). This would in-

hold guiltless⁴ anyone who takes his name in vain.

20:8 “Remember² the Sabbath³ day to set it apart as holy.⁴ **20:9** For six days⁵ you may labor⁶ and do all your work,⁷ **20:10** but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; on it⁸ you shall not do any work, you,⁹ or your son, or your daughter, or your male servant, or your female servant, or your cattle, or the resident foreigner who is in your gates.¹⁰ **20:11** For in six days the

clude perjury, pagan incantations, or idle talk. The name is to be treated with reverence and respect because it is the name of the holy God.

1 tn Or “leave unpunished.”

2 tn The text uses the infinitive absolute זָכַר (*zakhor*) for the commandment for the Sabbath day, which is the sign of the Sinaitic Covenant. The infinitive absolute functions in place of the emphatic imperative here (see GKC 346 §113.bb); the absolute stresses the basic verbal idea of the root – remembering. The verb includes the mental activity of recalling and pondering as well as the consequent actions for such remembering.

3 tn The word “Sabbath” is clearly connected to the verb שָׁבַת (*shavat*, “to cease, desist, rest”). There are all kinds of theories as to the origin of the day, most notably in the Babylonian world, but the differences are striking in so far as the pagan world had these days filled with magic. Nevertheless, the pagan world does bear witness to a tradition of a regular day set aside for special sacrifices. See, for example, H. W. Wolff, “The Day of Rest in the Old Testament,” *L7Q* 7 (1972): 65-76; H. Routenberg, “The Laws of Sabbath: Biblical Sources,” *Dor le Dor* 6 (1977): 41-43, 99-101, 153-55, 204-6; G. Robinson, “The Idea of Rest in the OT and the Search for the Basic Character of Sabbath,” *ZAW* 92 (1980): 32-42; and M. Tsevat, “The Basic Meaning of the Biblical Sabbath,” *ZAW* 84 (1972): 447-59.

4 tn The Piel infinitive construct provides the purpose of remembering the Sabbath day – to set it apart, to make it distinct from the other days. Verses 9 and 10 explain in part how this was to be done. To set this day apart as holy taught Israel the difference between the holy and the profane, that there was something higher than daily life. If an Israelite bent down to the ground laboring all week, the Sabbath called his attention to the heavens, to pattern life after the Creator (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 569-70).

5 tn The text has simply “six days,” but this is an adverbial accusative of time, answering how long they were to work (GKC 374 §118.k).

6 tn The imperfect tense has traditionally been rendered as a commandment, “you will labor.” But the point of this commandment is the prohibition of work on the seventh day. The permission nuance of the imperfect works well here.

7 tn This is the occupation, or business of the work week.

8 tn The phrase “on it” has been supplied for clarity.

9 sn The wife is omitted in the list, not that she was considered unimportant, nor that she was excluded from the rest, but rather in reflecting her high status. She was not man’s servant, not lesser than the man, but included with the man as an equal before God. The “you” of the commandments is addressed to the Israelites individually, male and female, just as God in the Garden of Eden held both the man and the woman responsible for their individual sins (see B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 567-68).

10 sn The Sabbath day was the sign of the Sinaitic Covenant. It required Israel to cease from ordinary labors and devote the day to God. It required Israel to enter into the life of God, to share his Sabbath. It gave them a chance to recall the work of the Creator. But in the NT the apostolic teaching for the Church does not make one day holier than another, but calls for the entire life to be sanctified to God. This teaching is an application of the meaning of entering into the Sabbath of God. The book of Hebrews declares that those who believe in Christ cease from their works and enter into his Sabbath rest. For a Christian keeping Saturday holy is not a require-

LORD made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, and he rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

20:12 “Honor¹¹ your father and your mother, that you may live a long time¹² in the land¹³ the LORD your God is giving to you.

20:13 “You shall not murder.¹⁴

20:14 “You shall not commit adultery.¹⁵

20:15 “You shall not steal.¹⁶

20:16 “You shall not give¹⁷ false testimony¹⁸ against your neighbor.

20:17 “You shall not covet¹⁹ your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife,

ment from the NT; it may be a good and valuable thing to have a day of rest and refreshment, but it is not a binding law for the Church. The principle of setting aside time to worship and serve the Lord has been carried forward, but the strict regulations have not.

11 tn The verb כָּבֵד (*kabbed*) is a Piel imperative; it calls for people to give their parents the respect and honor that is appropriate for them. It could be paraphrased to say, give them the weight of authority that they deserve. Next to God, parents were to be highly valued, cared for, and respected.

12 tn Heb “that your days may be long.”

13 sn The promise here is national rather than individual, although it is certainly true that the blessing of life was promised for anyone who was obedient to God’s commands (Deut 4:1, 8:1, etc.). But as W. C. Kaiser (“Exodus,” *EBC* 2:424) summarizes, the land that was promised was the land of Canaan, and the duration of Israel in the land was to be based on morality and the fear of God as expressed in the home (Deut 4:26, 33, 40; 32:46-47). The captivity was in part caused by a breakdown in this area (Ezek 22:7, 15). Malachi would announce at the end of his book that Elijah would come at the end of the age to turn the hearts of the children and the parents toward each other again.

14 tn The verb רָצַח (*ratsakh*) refers to the premeditated or accidental taking of the life of another human being; it includes any unauthorized killing (it is used for the punishment of a murderer, but that would not be included in the prohibition). This commandment teaches the sanctity of all human life. See J. H. Yoder, “Exodus 20,13: ‘Thou Shalt Not Kill,’” *Int* 34 (1980): 394-99; and A. Phillips, “Another Look at Murder,” *JJS* 28 (1977): 105-26.

15 sn This is a sin against the marriage of a fellow citizen – it destroys the home. The Law distinguished between adultery (which had a death penalty) and sexual contact with a young woman (which carried a monetary fine and usually marriage if the father was willing). So it distinguished fornication and adultery. Both were sins, but the significance of each was different. In the ancient world this sin is often referred to as “the great sin.”

16 sn This law protected the property of the Israelite citizen. See D. Little, “Exodus 20,15: ‘Thou Shalt Not Steal,’” *Int* 34 (1980): 399-405.

17 tn Heb “answer” as in a court of law.

18 tn The expression עָנָה שֵׁקֶר (*ed shaqer*) means “a lying witness” (B. S. Childs, *Exodus* [OTL], 388). In this verse the noun is an adverbial accusative, “you will not answer as a lying witness.” The prohibition is against perjury. While the precise reference would be to legal proceedings, the law probably had a broader application to lying about other people in general (see Lev 5:1; Hos 4:2).

19 tn The verb חָמַד (*khamad*) focuses not on an external act but on an internal mental activity behind the act, the motivation for it. The word can be used in a very good sense (Ps 19:10; 68:16), but it has a bad connotation in contexts where the object desired is off limits. This command is aimed at curtailing the greedy desire for something belonging to a neighbor, a desire that leads to the taking of it or the attempt to take it. It was used in the story of the Garden of Eden for the tree that was desired.

nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that belongs to your neighbor.”¹

20:18 All the people were seeing² the thundering and the lightning, and heard³ the sound of the horn, and saw⁴ the mountain smoking – and when⁵ the people saw it they trembled with fear⁶ and kept their distance.⁷ **20:19** They said to Moses, “You speak⁸ to us and we will listen, but do not let God speak with us, lest we die.” **20:20** Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you,⁹ that the fear of him¹⁰ may be before you so that you do not¹¹ sin.” **20:21** The people kept¹² their distance, but Moses drew near the thick darkness¹³ where God was.¹⁴

¹ sn See further G. Wittenburg, “The Tenth Commandment in the Old Testament,” *Journal for Theology in South Africa* 21 (1978): 3-17; and E. W. Nicholson, “The Decalogue as the Direct Address of God,” *VT* 27 (1977): 422-33.

² tn The participle is used here for durative action in the past time (GKC 359 §116.o).

³ tn The verb “to see” (רָאָה, *ra’ah*) refers to seeing with all the senses, or perceiving. W. C. Kaiser suggests that this is an example of the figure of speech called zeugma because the verb “saw” yokes together two objects, one that suits the verb and the other that does not. So, the verb “heard” is inserted here to clarify (“Exodus,” *EBC* 2:427).

⁴ tn The verb “saw” is supplied here because it is expected in English (see the previous note on “heard”).

⁵ tn The preterite with vav (ו) consecutive is here subordinated as a temporal clause to the following clause, which receives the prominence.

⁶ tn The meaning of נָטַע (*naa’*) is “to shake, sway to and fro” in fear. Compare Isa 7:2 – “and his heart shook...as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.”

⁷ tn Heb “and they stood from/at a distance.”

⁸ tn The verb is a Piel imperative. In this context it has more of the sense of a request than a command. The independent personal pronoun “you” emphasizes the subject and forms the contrast with God’s speaking.

⁹ tn נָסוּת (*nassot*) is the Piel infinitive construct; it forms the purpose of God’s coming with all the accompanying phenomena. The verb can mean “to try, test, prove.” The sense of “prove” fits this context best because the terrifying phenomena were intended to put the fear of God in their hearts so that they would obey. In other words, God was inspiring them to obey, not simply testing to see if they would.

¹⁰ tn The suffix on the noun is an objective genitive, referring to the fear that the people would have of God (GKC 439 §135.m).

¹¹ tn The negative form בְּלִיָּהּ (*l’vili*) is used here with the imperfect tense (see for other examples GKC 483 §152.x). This gives the imperfect the nuance of a final imperfect: that you might not sin. Others: to keep you from sin.

¹² tn Heb “and they stood”; the referent (the people) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹³ tn The word אַרְפֶּל (*arapel*) is used in poetry in Ps 18:9 and 1 Kgs 8:12; and it is used in Deut 4:11, 5:22 [19].

¹⁴ sn It will not be hard to expound the passage on the Ten Commandments once their place in scripture has been determined. They, for the most part, are reiterated in the NT, in one way or another, usually with a much higher standard that requires attention to the spirit of the laws. Thus, these laws reveal God’s standard of righteousness by revealing sin. No wonder the Israelites were afraid when they saw the manifestation of God and heard his laws. When the whole covenant is considered, preamble and all, then it becomes clear that the motivation for obeying the commands is the person and the work of the covenant God – the one who redeemed his people. Obedience then becomes a response of devotion and adoration to the Redeemer who set them free. It becomes loyal service, not enslavement to laws. The point could be word-

The Altar

20:22¹⁵ The LORD said¹⁶ to Moses: “Thus you will tell the Israelites: ‘You yourselves have seen that I have spoken with you from heaven. **20:23** You must not make gods of silver alongside me,¹⁷ nor make gods of gold for yourselves.¹⁸

20:24 ‘You must make for me an altar made of earth,¹⁹ and you will sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings,²⁰ your sheep and your cattle. In every place²¹ where I cause my name to be honored²² I will come to you and I will bless you. **20:25** If you make me an altar of stone, you must not build it²³ of stones shaped with tools,²⁴ for if you use your tool on it you

ed this way: God requires that his covenant people, whom he has redeemed, and to whom he has revealed himself, give their absolute allegiance and obedience to him. This means they will worship and serve him and safeguard the well-being of each other.

¹⁵ sn Based on the revelation of the holy sovereign God, this pericope instructs Israel on the form of proper worship of such a God. It focuses on the altar, the centerpiece of worship. The point of the section is this: those who worship this holy God must preserve holiness in the way they worship – they worship where he permits, in the manner he prescribes, and with the blessings he promises. This paragraph is said to open the Book of the Covenant, which specifically rules on matters of life and worship.

¹⁶ tn Heb “and Yahweh said.”

¹⁷ tn The direct object of the verb must be “gods of silver.” The prepositional phrase modifies the whole verse to say that these gods would then be alongside the one true God.

¹⁸ tn Heb “neither will you make for you gods of gold.”

¹⁹ sn U. Cassuto explains that by the understanding of parallelism each of the halves apply to the whole verse, so that “with me” and “for you” concern gods of silver or gods of gold (*Exodus*, 255).

²⁰ sn The instructions here call for the altar to be made of natural things, not things manufactured or shaped by man. The altar was either to be made of clumps of earth or natural, unhewn rocks.

²¹ sn The “burnt offering” is the offering prescribed in Lev 1. Everything of this animal went up in smoke as a sweet aroma to God. It signified complete surrender by the worshiper who brought the animal, and complete acceptance by God, thereby making atonement. The “peace offering” is legislated in Lev 3 and 7. This was a communal meal offering to celebrate being at peace with God. It was made usually for thanksgiving, for payment of vows, or as a freewill offering.

²² tn Gesenius lists this as one of the few places where the noun in construct seems to be indefinite in spite of the fact that the genitive has the article. He says בְּכֹל־הַמְּקוֹמִים (*b^hkhol-hammaqom*) means “in all the place, sc. of the sanctuary,” and is a dogmatic correction of “in every place” (בְּכֹל־הַמְּקוֹמִים, *kol-maqom*). See GKC 412 §127.e.

²³ tn The verb is זָכַר (*zakhar*, “to remember”), but in the H-phil especially it can mean more than remember or cause to remember (remind) – it has the sense of praise or honor. B. S. Childs says it has a denominative meaning, “to proclaim” (*Exodus* [OTL], 447). The point of the verse is that God will give Israel reason for praising and honoring him, and in every place that occurs he will make his presence known by blessing them.

²⁴ tn Heb “them” referring to the stones.

²⁵ tn Heb “of hewn stones.” Gesenius classifies this as an adverbial accusative – “you shall not build them (the stones of the altar) as hewn stones.” The remoter accusative is in apposition to the nearer (GKC 372 §117.kk).

have defiled it.¹ **20:26** And you must not go up by steps to my altar, so that your nakedness is not exposed.²

The Decisions

21:1³ “These are the decisions that you will set before them:

Hebrew Servants

21:2⁴ “If you buy⁵ a Hebrew servant,⁶ he is to serve you for six years, but in the seventh year he will go out free⁷ without paying anything.⁸ **21:3** If he came⁹ in by himself¹⁰ he will go out by himself; if he had¹¹ a wife when he came in, then

his wife will go out with him. **21:4** If his master gave¹² him a wife, and she bore sons or daughters, the wife and the children will belong to her master, and he will go out by himself. **21:5** But if the servant should declare,¹³ ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out¹⁴ free,’ **21:6** then his master must bring him to the judges,¹⁵ and he will bring him to the door or the doorposts, and his master will pierce his ear with an awl, and he shall serve him forever.¹⁶

21:7 “If a man sells his daughter¹⁷ as a female servant,¹⁸ she will not go out as the male servants do. **21:8** If she does not please¹⁹ her master, who has designated her²⁰ for himself, then he must let her be redeemed.²¹ He has no

¹ **tn** The verb is a preterite with *vav* (ו) consecutive. It forms the apodosis in a conditional clause: “if you lift up your tool on it...you have defiled it.”

² **tn** *Heb* “uncovered” (so ASV, NAB).

³ **sn** There follows now a series of rulings called “the decisions” or “the judgments” (הַחֲשִׁבֹתִים, *hammishpatim*). A precept is stated, and then various cases in which the law is applicable are examined. These rulings are all in harmony with the Decalogue that has just been given and can be grouped into three categories: civil or criminal laws, religious or cultic laws, and moral or humanitarian laws. The civil and criminal laws make up most of chap. 21; the next two chapters mix the other kinds of laws. Among the many studies of this section of the book are F. C. Fensham, “The Role of the Lord in the Legal Sections of the Covenant Code,” *VT* 26 (1976): 262-74; S. Paul, “Unrecognized Biblical Legal Idioms in Light of Comparative Akkadian Expressions,” *RB* 86 (1979): 231-39; M. Galston, “The Purpose of the Law According to Maimonides,” *JQR* 69 (1978): 27-51.

⁴ **sn** See H. L. Elleson, “The Hebrew Slave: A Study in Early Israelite Society,” *EvQ* 45 (1973): 30-35; N. P. Lemche, “The Manumission of Slaves – The Fallow Year – The Sabbatical Year – The Jubel Year,” *VT* 26 (1976): 38-59, and “The ‘Hebrew Slave,’ Comments on the Slave Law – Ex. 21:2-11,” *VT* 25 (1975): 129-44.

⁵ **tn** The verbs in both the conditional clause and the following ruling are imperfect tense: “if you buy...then he will serve.” The second imperfect tense (the ruling) could be taken either as a specific future or an obligatory imperfect. Gesenius explains how the verb works in the conditional clauses here (see GK 497 §159.bb).

⁶ **sn** The interpretation of “Hebrew” in this verse is uncertain: (1) a gentile ending, (2) a fellow Israelite, (3) or a class of mercenaries of the population (see W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:431). It seems likely that the term describes someone born a Hebrew, as opposed to a foreigner (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 210). The literature on this includes: M. P. Gray, “The *Habiru*-Hebrew Problem,” *HUCA* 29 (1958): 135-202.

⁷ **tn** The word חֲפְשִׁי (khofshi) means “free.” It is possible that there is some connection between this word and a technical term used in other cultures for a social class of emancipated slaves who were freemen again (see I. Mendelsohn, “New Light on the *Hupsu*,” *BASOR* 139 [1955]: 9-11).

⁸ **tn** The adverb הִנָּמַם (hinmam) means “gratis, free”; it is related to the verb “to be gracious, show favor” and the noun “grace.”

⁹ **tn** The tense is imperfect, but in the conditional clause it clearly refers to action that is anterior to the action in the next clause. *Heb* “if he comes in single, he goes out single,” that is, “if he came in single, he will go out single.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “with his back” meaning “alone.”

¹¹ **tn** The phrase says, “if he was the possessor of a wife”; the noun בַּעַל (ba'al) can mean “possessor” or “husband.” If there was a wife, she shared his fortunes or his servitude; if he entered with her, she would accompany him when he left.

¹² **sn** The slave would not have the right or the means to acquire a wife. Thus, the idea of the master’s “giving” him a wife is clear – the master would have to pay the bride price and make the provision. In this case, the wife and the children are actually the possession of the master unless the slave were to pay the bride price – but he is a slave because he got into debt. The law assumes that the master was better able to provide for this woman than the freed slave and that it was most important to keep the children with the mother.

¹³ **tn** The imperfect with the infinitive absolute means that the declaration is unambiguous, that the servant will clearly affirm that he wants to stay with the master. Gesenius says that in a case like this the infinitive emphasizes the importance of the condition on which some consequence depends (GKC 342-43 §113.o).

¹⁴ **tn** Or taken as a desiderative imperfect, it would say, “I do not want to go out free.”

¹⁵ **tn** The word is אֱלֹהִים (*ha'elohim*). S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 211) says the phrase means “to God,” namely the nearest sanctuary in order that the oath and the ritual might be made solemn, although he does say that it would be done by human judges. That the reference is to Yahweh God is the view also of F. C. Fensham, “New Light on Exodus 21:7 and 22:7 from the Laws of Eshnunna,” *JBL* 78 (1959): 160-61. Cf. also ASV, NAB, NASB, NCV, NRSV, NLT. Others have made a stronger case that it refers to judges who acted on behalf of God; see C. Gordon, “אֱלֹהִים in its Reputed Meaning of Rulers, Judges,” *JBL* 54 (1935): 134-44; and A. E. Draffkorn, “Ilani/Elohim,” *JBL* 76 (1957): 216-24; cf. KJV, NIV.

¹⁶ **tn** Or “till his life’s end” (as in the idiom: “serve him for good”).

¹⁷ **sn** This paragraph is troubling to modern readers, but given the way that marriages were contracted and the way people lived in the ancient world, it was a good provision for people who might want to find a better life for their daughter. On the subject in general for this chapter, see W. M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, 31-64.

¹⁸ **tn** The word אַמָּה (*amah*) refers to a female servant who would eventually become a concubine or wife; the sale price included the amount for the service as well as the bride price (see B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 621). The arrangement recognized her honor as an Israelite woman, one who could be a wife, even though she entered the household in service. The marriage was not automatic, as the conditions show, but her treatment was safeguarded come what may. The law was a way, then, for a poor man to provide a better life for a daughter.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “and if unpleasant (רָעָה, *ra'ah*) in the eyes of her master.”

²⁰ **tn** The verb יָעַד (*ya'ad*) does not mean “betroth, espouse” as some of the earlier translations had it, but “to designate.” When he bought the girl, he designated her for himself, giving her and her family certain expectations.

²¹ **tn** The verb is a Hiphil perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive from פָּדָה (*padah*, “to redeem”). Here in the apodosis the form is equivalent to an imperfect: “let someone redeem her” – perhaps her father if he can, or another. U. Cassuto says it can also mean she can redeem herself and dissolve the rela-

right⁴ to sell her to a foreign nation, because he has dealt deceitfully² with her. **21:9** If he designated her for his son, then he will deal with her according to the customary rights³ of daughters. **21:10** If he takes another wife,⁴ he must not diminish the first one's food,⁵ her clothing, or her marital rights.⁶ **21:11** If he does not provide her with these three things, then she will go out free, without paying money.⁷

Personal Injuries

21:12⁸ "Whoever strikes someone⁹ so that he dies¹⁰ must surely be put to death.¹¹ **21:13** But if he does not do it with premeditation,¹² but it happens by accident,¹³ then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee. **21:14** But if a man willfully attacks his neighbor to kill him

cunningly,¹⁴ you will take him even from my altar that he may die.

21:15 "Whoever strikes¹⁵ his father or his mother must surely be put to death.

21:16 "Whoever kidnaps someone¹⁶ and sells him,¹⁷ or is caught still holding him,¹⁸ must surely be put to death.

21:17 "Whoever treats his father or his mother disgracefully¹⁹ must surely be put to death.

21:18 "If men fight, and one strikes his neighbor with a stone or with his fist and he does not die, but must remain in bed,²⁰ **21:19** and then²¹ if he gets up and walks about²² outside on his staff, then the one who struck him is innocent, except he must pay²³ for the injured person's²⁴ loss of time²⁵ and see to it that he is fully healed.

21:20 "If a man strikes his male servant or his female servant with a staff so that he or she²⁶

relationship (*Exodus*, 268).

¹ **tn** *Heb* "he has no authority/power," for the verb means "rule, have dominion."

² **sn** The deceit is in not making her his wife or concubine as the arrangement had stipulated.

³ **tn** Or "after the manner of" (KJV, ASV); NRSV "shall deal with her as with a daughter."

⁴ **tn** "wife" has been supplied.

⁵ **tn** The translation of "food" does not quite do justice to the Hebrew word. It is "flesh." The issue here is that the family she was to marry into is wealthy, they ate meat. She was not just to be given the basic food the ordinary people ate, but the fine foods that this family ate.

⁶ **sn** See S. Paul, "Exodus 21:10, A Threefold Maintenance Clause," *JNES* 28 (1969): 48-53. Paul suggests that the third element listed is not marital rights but ointments since Sumerian and Akkadian texts list food, clothing, and oil as the necessities of life. The translation of "marital rights" is far from certain, since the word occurs only here. The point is that the woman was to be cared for with all that was required for a woman in that situation.

⁷ **sn** The lessons of slavery and service are designed to bring justice to existing customs in antiquity. The message is: Those in slavery for one reason or another should have the hope of freedom and the choice of service (vv. 2-6). For the rulings on the daughter, the message could be: Women, who were often at the mercy of their husbands or masters, must not be trapped in an unfortunate situation, but be treated well by their masters or husbands (vv. 7-11). God is preventing people who have power over others from abusing it.

⁸ **sn** The underlying point of this section remains vital today: The people of God must treat all human life as sacred.

⁹ **tn** The construction uses a Hiphil participle in construct with the noun for "man" (or person as is understood in a law for the nation): "the one striking [of] a man." This is a *casus pendens* (independent nominative absolute); it indicates the condition or action that involves further consequence (GKC 361 §116.w).

¹⁰ **tn** The Hebrew word *vamet* (*vamet*) is a Qal perfect with *vav* consecutive; it means "and he dies" and not "and killed him" (which requires another stem). Gesenius notes that this form after a participle is the equivalent of a sentence representing a contingent action (GKC 333 §112.n). The word shows the result of the action in the opening participle. It is therefore a case of murder or manslaughter.

¹¹ **sn** See A. Phillips, "Another Look at Murder," *JIS* 28 (1977): 105-26.

¹² **tn** *Heb* "if he does not lie in wait" (NASB similar).

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "and God brought into his hand." The death is unintended, its circumstances outside human control.

¹⁴ **tn** The word *ʿormah* (*'ormah*) is problematic. It could mean with prior intent, which would be connected with the word in Prov 8:5. 12 which means "understanding" (or "prudence" – fully aware of the way things are). It could be connected also to an Arabic word for "enemy" which would indicate this was done with malice or evil intentions (J. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 270). The use here seems parallel to the one in Josh 9:4, an instance involving intentionality and clever deception.

¹⁵ **sn** This is the same construction that was used in v. 12, but here there is no mention of the parents' death. This attack, then, does not lead to their death – if he killed one of them then v. 12 would be the law. S. R. Driver says that the severity of the penalty was in accord with the high view of parents (*Exodus*, 216).

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* "a stealer of a man," thus "anyone stealing a man."

¹⁷ **sn** The implication is that it would be an Israelite citizen who was kidnapped and sold to a foreign tribe or country (like Joseph). There was always a market for slaves. The crime would be in forcibly taking the individual away from his home and religion and putting him into bondage or death.

¹⁸ **tn** Literally "and he is found in his hand" (KJV and ASV both similar), being not yet sold.

¹⁹ **tn** The form is a Piel participle from *qalal* (*qalal*), meaning in Qal "be light," in Piel "treat lightly, curse, revile, declare contemptible, treat shamefully." (See its use in Lev 19:14; Josh 24:9; Judg 9:26-28; 1 Sam 3:13; 17:43; 2 Sam 16:5-13; Prov 30:10-11; Eccl 7:21-22; 10:20.) It is opposite of "honor" (*kaved*, *kaved*; Qal "be heavy"; Piel "honor," as in 20:12) and of "bless." This verse then could refer to any act contrary to the commandment to honor the parents. B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 640) cites parallels in Sumerian where people were severely punished for publicly disowning their parents. "21:15, 17 taken together evoke the picture of parents who, physically and verbally, are forcibly turned out of the house (cf. Prov. 19:26)" (C. Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:148).

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* "falls to bed."

²¹ **tn** "and then" has been supplied.

²² **tn** The verb is a Hitpaal perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive; it follows the sequence of the imperfect before it – "if he gets up and walks about." This is proof of recovery.

²³ **tn** The imperfect tense carries a nuance of obligatory imperfect because this is binding on the one who hit him.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* "his"; the referent (the injured person) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁵ **tn** The word appears to be the infinitive from the verb "to sit" with a meaning of "his sitting down"; some suggest it is from the verb "to rest" with a meaning "cease." In either case the point in the context must mean compensation is due for the time he was down.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* "so that he"; the words "or she" have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

dies as a result of the blow,¹ he will surely be punished.² **21:21** However, if the injured servant³ survives one or two days, the owner⁴ will not be punished, for he has suffered the loss.⁵

21:22 “If men fight and hit a pregnant woman and her child is born prematurely,⁶ but there is no serious injury, he will surely be punished in accordance with what the woman’s husband demands of him, and he will pay what the court decides.⁷ **21:23** But if there is serious injury, then you will give a life for a life, **21:24** eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, **21:25** burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.⁸

21:26 “If a man strikes the eye of his male servant or his female servant so that he destroys it,⁹ he will let the servant¹⁰ go free¹¹ as compensation for the eye. **21:27** If he knocks out the tooth of his male servant or his female servant, he will

let the servant¹² go free as compensation for the tooth.

Laws about Animals

21:28¹³ “If an ox¹⁴ gores a man or a woman so that either dies,¹⁵ then the ox must surely¹⁶ be stoned and its flesh must not be eaten, but the owner of the ox will be acquitted. **21:29** But if the ox had the habit of goring, and its owner was warned,¹⁷ and he did not take the necessary precautions,¹⁸ and then it killed a man or a woman, the ox must be stoned and the man must be put to death. **21:30** If a ransom is set for him,¹⁹ then he must pay the redemption for his life according to whatever amount was set for him. **21:31** If the ox²⁰ gores a son or a daughter, the owner²¹ will be dealt with according to this rule.²² **21:32** If the ox gores a male servant or a female servant, the owner²³ must pay thirty shekels of silver,²⁴ and the ox must be stoned.²⁵

21:33 “If a man opens a pit or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, **21:34** the owner of the pit must repay²⁶ the loss. He must give money²⁷ to its

¹ tn Heb “under his hand.”

² tn Heb “will be avenged” (how is not specified).

³ tn Heb “if he”; the referent (the servant struck and injured in the previous verse) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁴ tn Heb “he”; the referent (the owner of the injured servant) has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

⁵ tn This last clause is a free paraphrase of the Hebrew, “for he is his money” (so KJV, ASV); NASB “his property.” It seems that if the slave survives a couple of days, it is probable that the master was punishing him and not intending to kill him. If he then dies, there is no penalty other than that the owner loses the slave who is his property – he suffers the loss.

⁶ tn This line has occasioned a good deal of discussion. It may indicate that the child was killed, as in a miscarriage; or it may mean that there was a premature birth. The latter view is taken here because of the way the whole section is written: (1) “her children come out” reflects a birth and not the loss of children, (2) there is no serious damage, and (3) payment is to be set for any remuneration. The word אָסוֹן (*ason*) is translated “serious damage.” The word was taken in *Mekilta* to mean “death.” U. Cassuto says the point of the phrase is that neither the woman or the children that are born die (*Exodus*, 275). But see among the literature on this: M. G. Kline, “*Lex Tallionis* and the Human Fetus,” *JETS* 20 (1977): 193-201; W. House, “Miscarriage or Premature Birth: Additional Thoughts on *Exodus* 21:22-25,” *WTJ* 41 (1978): 108-23; S. E. Loewenstamm, “*Exodus* XXI 22-25,” *VT* 27 (1977): 352-60.

⁷ tn The word בְּיָדֵי־לִמְיָם (*biflilim*) means “with arbitrators.” The point then seems to be that the amount of remuneration for damages that was fixed by the husband had to be approved by the courts. S. R. Driver mentions an alternative to this unusual reading presented by Budde, reading בְּיָדֵי־לִמְיָם as “untimely birth” (*Exodus*, 219). See also E. A. Speiser, “The Stem PLL in Hebrew,” *JBL* 82 (1963): 301-6.

⁸ sn The text now introduces the *Lex Tallionis* with cases that were not likely to have applied to the situation of the pregnant woman. See K. Luke, “Eye for Eye, Tooth for Tooth,” *Indian Theological Studies* 16 (1979): 326-43.

⁹ tn The form וְיִשְׁחָתָהּ (*v'shikhatah*) is the Piel perfect with the *vav* (ו) consecutive, rendered “and destroys it.” The verb is a strong one, meaning “to ruin, completely destroy.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “him”; the referent (the male or female servant) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹¹ sn Interestingly, the verb used here for “let him go” is the same verb throughout the first part of the book for “release” of the Israelites from slavery. Here, an Israelite will have to release the injured slave.

¹² tn Heb “him”; the referent (the male or female servant) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹³ sn The point that this section of the laws makes is that one must ensure the safety of others by controlling the circumstances.

¹⁴ tn Traditionally “ox,” but “bull” would also be suitable. The term may refer to one of any variety of large cattle.

¹⁵ tn Heb “and he dies”; KJV “that they die”; NAB, NASB “to death.”

¹⁶ tn The text uses שָׁקַל יִשְׁקַל (*saqol yissaqel*), a Qal infinitive absolute with a Niphal imperfect. The infinitive intensifies the imperfect, which here has an obligatory nuance or is a future of instruction.

¹⁷ tn The Hophal perfect has the idea of “attested, testified against.”

¹⁸ tn Heb “he was not keeping it” or perhaps guarding or watching it (referring to the ox).

¹⁹ sn The family of the victim would set the amount for the ransom of the man guilty of criminal neglect. This practice was common in the ancient world, rare in Israel. If the family allowed the substitute price, then the man would be able to redeem his life.

²⁰ tn Heb “it”; the referent (the ox) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²¹ tn Heb “he”; the referent (the owner) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²² tn Heb “according to this judgment it shall be done to him.”

²³ tn Heb “he”; the referent (the owner) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁴ sn A shekel was a unit for measure by means of a scale. Both the weight and the value of a shekel of silver are hard to determine. “Though there is no certainty, the shekel is said to weigh about 11.5 grams” (C. Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:181). Over four hundred years earlier, Joseph was sold into Egypt for 20 shekels. The free Israelite citizen was worth about 50 shekels (*Lev* 27:3f.).

²⁵ sn See further B. S. Jackson, “The Goring Ox Again [*Ex.* 21:28-36],” *JJP* 18 (1974): 55-94.

²⁶ tn The verb is a Piel imperfect from שָׁלַם (*shalam*); it has the idea of making payment in full, making recompense, repaying. These imperfections could be given a future tense translation as imperfections of instruction, but in the property cases an obligatory imperfect fits better – this is what he is bound or obliged to do – what he must do.

²⁷ tn Heb “silver.”

owner, and the dead animal¹ will become his. **21:35** If the ox of one man injures the ox of his neighbor so that it dies, then they will sell the live ox and divide its proceeds,² and they will also divide the dead ox.³ **21:36** Or if it is known that the ox had the habit of goring, and its owner did not take the necessary precautions, he must surely pay⁴ ox for ox, and the dead animal will become his.⁵

Laws about Property

22:1⁶ (21:37)⁷ “If a man steals an ox or a sheep and kills it or sells it, he must pay back⁸ five head of cattle for the ox, and four sheep for the one sheep.⁹

22:2 “If a thief is caught¹⁰ breaking in¹¹ and is struck so that he dies, there will be no blood guilt for him.¹² **22:3** If the sun has risen on him, then there is blood guilt for him. A thief¹³ must

surely make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he will be sold for his theft. **22:4** If the stolen item should in fact be found¹⁴ alive in his possession,¹⁵ whether it be an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he must pay back double.¹⁶

22:5 “If a man grazes¹⁷ his livestock¹⁸ in a field or a vineyard, and he lets the livestock loose and they graze in the field of another man, he must make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.

22:6 “If a fire breaks out and spreads¹⁹ to thorn bushes,²⁰ so that stacked grain or standing grain or the whole field is consumed, the one who started²¹ the fire must surely make restitution.

22:7 “If a man gives his neighbor money or articles²² for safekeeping,²³ and it is stolen from the man’s house, if the thief is caught,²⁴ he must repay double. **22:8** If the thief is not caught,²⁵ then the owner of the house will be brought before the judges²⁶ to see²⁷ whether he has laid²⁸

¹ tn Here the term “animal” has been supplied.

² tn Literally “its silver” or “silver for it.”

³ tn Heb “divide the dead.” The noun “ox” has been supplied.

⁴ tn The construction now uses the same Piel imperfect (v. 34) but adds the infinitive absolute to it for emphasis.

⁵ sn The point of this section (21:28-36) seems to be that one must ensure the safety of others by controlling one’s property and possessions. This section pertained to neglect with animals, but the message would have applied to similar situations. The people of God were to take heed to ensure the well-being of others, and if there was a problem, it had to be made right.

⁶ sn The next section of laws concerns property rights. These laws protected property from thieves and oppressors, but also set limits to retribution. The message could be: God’s laws demand that the guilty make restitution for their crimes against property and that the innocent be exonerated.

⁷ sn Beginning with **22:1**, the verse numbers through **22:31** in the English Bible differ from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (BHS), with **22:1** ET = **21:37** HT, **22:2** ET = **22:1** HT, etc., through **22:31** ET = **22:30** HT. Thus in the English Bible ch. 22 has 31 verses, while in the Hebrew Bible it has 30 verses, with the one extra verse attached to ch. 21 in the Hebrew Bible.

⁸ tn The imperfect tense here has the nuance of obligatory imperfect – he must pay back.

⁹ tn **בָּקָר** (*baqar*) and **צֹאֵן** (*so’*n**) are the categories to which the ox and the sheep belonged, so that the criminal had some latitude in paying back animals.

¹⁰ tn Heb “found” (so KJV, ASV, NRSV).

¹¹ tn The word **בְּמַחְתֵּרֶת** (*bammakhteret*) means “digging through” the walls of a house (usually made of mud bricks). The verb is used only a few times and has the meaning of dig in (as into houses) or row hard (as in Jonah 1:13).

¹² tn The text has “there is not to him bloods.” When the word “blood” is put in the plural, it refers to bloodshed, or the price of blood that is shed, i.e., blood guiltiness.

¹³ sn This law focuses on what is reasonable defense against burglary. If someone killed a thief who was breaking in during the night, he was not charged because he would not have known it was just a thief, but if it happened during the day, he was guilty of a crime, on the assumption that in daylight the thief posed no threat to the homeowner’s life and could be stopped and made to pay restitution.

¹⁴ tn The words “a thief” have been added for clarification. S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 224) thinks that these lines are out of order, since some of them deal with killing the thief and then others with the thief making restitution, but rearranging the clauses is not a necessary way to bring clarity to the paragraph. The idea here would be that any thief caught alive would pay restitution.

¹⁴ tn The construction uses a Niphal infinitive absolute and a Niphal imperfect: if it should indeed be found. Gesenius says that in such conditional clauses the infinitive absolute has less emphasis, but instead emphasizes the condition on which some consequence depends (see GKC 342-43 §113.0).

¹⁵ tn Heb “in his hand.”

¹⁶ sn He must pay back one for what he took, and then one for the penalty – his loss as he was inflicting a loss on someone else.

¹⁷ tn The verb **בָּעַר** (*ba’ar*, “graze”) as a denominative from the word “livestock” is not well attested. So some have suggested that with slight changes this verse could be read: “If a man cause a field or a vineyard to be burnt, and let the burning spread, and it burnt in another man’s field” (see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 225).

¹⁸ tn The phrase “his livestock” is supplied from the next clause.

¹⁹ tn Heb “if a fire gets out and finds”; NLT “if a fire gets out of control.”

²⁰ sn Thorn bushes were used for hedges between fields, but thorn bushes also burned easily, making the fire spread rapidly.

²¹ tn This is a Hiphil participle of the verb “to burn, kindle” used substantivally. This is the one who caused the fire, whether by accident or not.

²² tn The word usually means “vessels” but can have the sense of household goods and articles. It could be anything from jewels and ornaments to weapons or pottery.

²³ tn Heb “to keep.” Here “safekeeping,” that is, to keep something secure on behalf of a third party, is intended.

²⁴ tn Heb “found.”

²⁵ tn Heb “found.”

²⁶ tn Here again the word used is “the gods,” meaning the judges who made the assessments and decisions. In addition to other works, see J. R. Vannoy, “The Use of the Word *ha’elohim* in Exodus 21:6 and 22:7,8,” *The Law and the Prophets*, 225-41.

²⁷ tn The phrase “to see” has been supplied.

²⁸ tn The line says “if he has not stretched out his hand.” This could be the oath formula, but the construction here would be unusual, or it could be taken as “whether” (see W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EB*C 2:438). U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 286) does not think the wording can possibly fit an oath; nevertheless, an oath would be involved before God (as he takes it instead of “judges”) – if the man swore, his word would be accepted, but if he would not swear, he would be guilty.

his hand on his neighbor's goods. **22:9** In all cases of illegal possessions,¹ whether for an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any kind of lost item, about which someone says "This belongs to me,"² the matter of the two of them will come before the judges,³ and the one whom⁴ the judges declare guilty⁵ must repay double to his neighbor. **22:10** If a man gives his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep, and it dies or is hurt⁶ or is carried away⁷ without anyone seeing it,⁸ **22:11** then there will be an oath to the LORD⁹ between the two of them, that he has not laid his hand on his neighbor's goods, and its owner will accept this, and he will not have to pay. **22:12** But if it was stolen¹⁰ from him,¹¹ he will pay its owner. **22:13** If it is torn in pieces, then he will bring it for evidence,¹² and he will not have to pay for what was torn.

22:14 "If a man borrows an animal¹³ from his neighbor, and it is hurt or dies when its owner was not with it, the man who borrowed it¹⁴ will surely pay. **22:15** If its owner was with it, he will not have to pay; if it was hired, what was paid for the hire covers it.¹⁵

1 tn Heb "concerning every kind [thing] of trespass."

2 tn The text simply has "this is it" (זֶה הוּא, *hu' zeh*).

3 tn Again, or "God."

4 tn This kind of clause Gesenius calls an independent relative clause – it does not depend on a governing substantive but itself expresses a substantial idea (GKC 445-46 §138. e).

5 tn The verb means "to be guilty" in Qal; in Hiphil it would have a declarative sense, because a causative sense would not possibly fit.

6 tn The form is a Niphal participle from the verb "to break" – "is broken," which means harmed, maimed, or hurt in any way.

7 tn This verb is frequently used with the meaning "to take captive." The idea here then is that raiders or robbers have carried off the animal.

8 tn Heb "there is no one seeing."

9 tn The construct relationship שְׁבַעְתָּ יְהוָה (shēvu'at yēhvah, "the oath of Yahweh") would require a genitive of indirect object, "an oath [to] Yahweh." U. Cassuto suggests that it means "an oath by Yahweh" (*Exodus*, 287). The person to whom the animal was entrusted would take a solemn oath to Yahweh that he did not appropriate the animal for himself, and then his word would be accepted.

10 tn Both with this verb "stolen" and in the next clauses with "torn in pieces," the text uses the infinitive absolute construction with less than normal emphasis; as Gesenius says, in conditional clauses, an infinitive absolute stresses the importance of the condition on which some consequence depends (GKC 342-43 §113. o).

11 sn The point is that the man should have taken better care of the animal.

12 tn The word עֵד (*ed*) actually means "witness," but the dead animal that is returned is a silent witness, i.e., evidence. The word is an adverbial accusative.

13 tn Heb "if a man asks [an animal] from his neighbor" (see also Exod 12:36). The ruling here implies an animal is borrowed, and if harm comes to it when the owner is not with it, the borrower is liable. The word "animal" is supplied in the translation for clarity.

14 tn Heb "he"; the referent (the man who borrowed the animal) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

15 tn Literally "it came with/for its hire," this expression implies that the owner who hired it out and was present was prepared to take the risk, so there would be no compensation.

Moral and Ceremonial Laws

22:16-16 "If a man seduces a virgin¹⁷ who is not engaged¹⁸ and has sexual relations with her, he must surely endow¹⁹ her to be his wife. **22:17** If her father refuses to give her to him, he must pay money for the bride price of virgins.

22:18 "You must not allow a sorceress to live."²⁰

22:19 "Whoever has sexual relations²¹ with a beast must surely be put to death.

22:20 "Whoever sacrifices to a god other than the LORD²² alone must be utterly destroyed."²³

22:21 "You must not wrong²⁴ a foreigner²⁵ nor oppress him, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

22:22 "You must not afflict²⁶ any widow or orphan. **22:23** If you afflict them²⁷ in any way²⁸ and they cry to me, I will surely hear²⁹ their cry, **22:24** and my anger will burn and I will kill you

16 sn The second half of the chapter records various laws of purity and justice. Any of them could be treated in an expository way, but in the present array they offer a survey of God's righteous standards: Maintain the sanctity of marriage (16-17); maintain the purity of religious institutions (18-20); maintain the rights of human beings (21-28); maintain the rights of Yahweh (29-31).

17 tn This is the word בְּתוּלָה (*bēṭulah*); it describes a young woman who is not married or a young woman engaged to be married; in any case, she is presumed to be a virgin.

18 tn Or "pledged" for marriage.

19 tn The verb כָּתַר (*khatar*) means "pay the marriage price," and the related noun is the bride price. B. Jacob says this was a proposal gift and not a purchase price (*Exodus*, 700). This is the price paid to her parents, which allowed for provision should there be a divorce. The amount was usually agreed on by the two families, but the price was higher for a pure bride from a noble family. Here, the one who seduces her must pay it, regardless of whether he marries her or not.

20 sn There still were many who wished to follow pagan beliefs and consort with the dead (see Deut 18:10-11). The sorceress was someone who dealt with drugs or herbs for occult purposes.

21 tn Heb "lies with."

22 tn Heb "not to Yahweh."

23 tn The verb חָרַם (*kharam*) means "to be devoted" to God or "to be banned." The idea is that it would be God's to do with as he liked. What was put under the ban was for God alone, either for his service or for his judgment. But it was out of human control. Here the verb is saying that the person will be utterly destroyed.

24 tn Or "oppress."

25 tn Or "alien," both here and in 23:9. This individual is a resident foreigner; he lives in the land but, aside from provisions such as this, might easily be without legal rights.

26 tn The verb "afflict" is a Piel imperfect from אָנָה (*'anah*); it has a wide range of meanings: "afflict, oppress, humiliate, rape." These victims are at the mercy of the judges, businessmen, or villains. The righteous king and the righteous people will not mistreat them (see Isa 1:17; Job 31:16, 17, 21).

27 tn The accusative here is the masculine singular pronoun, which leads S. R. Driver to conclude that this line is out of place, even though the masculine singular can be used in places like this (*Exodus*, 232). U. Cassuto says its use is to refer to certain classes (*Exodus*, 292).

28 tn Here again and with "cry" the infinitive absolute functions with a diminished emphasis (GKC 342-43 §113. o).

29 tn Here is the normal use of the infinitive absolute with the imperfect tense to emphasize the verb: "I will surely hear," implying, "I will surely respond."

with the sword, and your wives will be widows and your children will be fatherless.¹

22:25 “If you lend money to any of² my people who are needy among you, do not be like a moneylender³ to him; do not charge⁴ him interest.⁵

22:26 If you do take⁶ the garment of your neighbor in pledge, you must return it to him by the time the sun goes down,⁷ **22:27** for it is his only covering – it is his garment for his body.⁸ What else can he sleep in?⁹ And¹⁰ when he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am gracious.

22:28 “You must not blaspheme¹¹ God¹² or curse the ruler of your people.

22:29 “Do not hold back offerings from your granaries or your vats.¹³ You must give me the firstborn of your sons. **22:30** You must also do this for your oxen and for your sheep; seven

days they may remain with their mothers, but give them to me on the eighth day.

22:31 “You will be holy¹⁴ people to me; you must not eat any meat torn by animals in the field.¹⁵ You must throw it to the dogs.

Justice

23:1¹⁶ “You must not give¹⁷ a false report.¹⁸ Do not make common cause¹⁹ with the wicked²⁰ to be a malicious²¹ witness.

23:2 “You must not give²² a false report as to pervert justice,²⁴ **23:3** and you must not show partiality²⁵ to a poor man in his lawsuit.

23:4 “If you encounter²⁶ your enemy’s ox or donkey wandering off, you must by all means return²⁷ it to him. **23:5** If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen under its load,

¹ **sn** The punishment will follow the form of talionic justice, an eye for an eye, in which the punishment matches the crime. God will use invading armies (“sword” is a metonymy of adjunct here) to destroy them, making their wives widows and their children orphans.

² **tn** “any of” has been supplied.

³ **sn** The moneylender will be demanding and exacting. In Ps 109:11 and 2 Kgs 4:1 the word is rendered as “extortioner.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “set.”

⁵ **sn** In ancient times money was lent primarily for poverty and not for commercial ventures (H. Gamoran, “The Biblical Law against Loans on Interest,” *JNES* 30 [1971]: 127-34). The lending to the poor was essentially a charity, and so not to be an opportunity to make money from another person’s misfortune. The word נֶשֶׁה (*neshekh*) may be derived from a verb that means “to bite,” and so the idea of usury or interest was that of putting out one’s money with a bite in it (See S. Stein, “The Laws on Interest in the Old Testament,” *JTS* 4 [1953]: 161-70; and E. Neufeld, “The Prohibition against Loans at Interest in the Old Testament,” *HUCA* 26 [1955]: 355-412).

⁶ **tn** The construction again uses the infinitive absolute with the verb in the conditional clause to stress the condition.

⁷ **tn** The clause uses the preposition, the infinitive construct, and the noun that is the subjective genitive – “at the going in of the sun.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “his skin.”

⁹ **tn** Literally the text reads, “In what can he lie down?” The cloak would be used for a covering at night to use when sleeping. The garment, then, was the property that could not be taken and not given back – it was the last possession. The modern idiom of “the shirt off his back” gets at the point being made here.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and it will be.”

¹¹ **tn** The two verbs in this verse are synonyms: קָלַל (*qalal*) means “to treat lightly, curse,” and אָרַר (*arar*) means “to curse.”

¹² **tn** The word אֱלֹהִים (*elohim*) is “gods” or “God.” If taken as the simple plural, it could refer to the human judges, as it has in the section of laws; this would match the parallelism in the verse. If it was taken to refer to God, then the idea of cursing God would be more along the line of blasphemy. B. Jacob says that the word refers to functioning judges, and that would indirectly mean God, for they represented the religious authority, and the prince the civil authority (*Exodus*, 708).

¹³ **tn** The expressions are unusual. U. Cassuto renders them: “from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses” (*Exodus*, 294). He adds the Hittite parallel material to show that the people were to bring the offerings on time and not let them overlap, because the firstfruits had to be eaten first by the priest.

¹⁴ **sn** The use of this word here has to do with the laws of the sanctuary and not some advanced view of holiness. The ritual holiness at the sanctuary would prohibit eating anything torn to pieces.

¹⁵ **tn** Or “by wild animals.”

¹⁶ **sn** People who claim to worship and serve the righteous judge of the universe must preserve equity and justice in their dealings with others. These verses teach that God’s people must be honest witnesses (1-3); God’s people must be righteous even with enemies (4-5); and God’s people must be fair in dispensing justice (6-9).

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “take up, lift, carry” (נָשָׂא, *nasa'*). This verb was also used in the prohibition against taking “the name of Yahweh in vain.” Sometimes the object of this verb is physical, as in Jonah 1:12 and 15. Used in this prohibition involving speech, it covers both originating and repeating a lie.

¹⁸ **tn** Or “a groundless report” (see Exod 20:7 for the word שָׁוְיָ, *shav'*).

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “do not put your hand” (cf. KJV, ASV); NASB “join your hand.”

²⁰ **tn** The word “wicked” (רָשָׁע, *rasha'*) refers to the guilty criminal, the person who is doing something wrong. In the religious setting it describes the person who is not a member of the covenant and may be involved in all kinds of sin, even though there is the appearance of moral and spiritual stability.

²¹ **tn** The word חָמָס (*khamas*) often means “violence” in the sense of social injustices done to other people, usually the poor and needy. A “malicious” witness would do great harm to others. See J. W. McKay, “Exodus 23:1-3, 6-8: A Decalogue for Administration of Justice in the City Gate,” *VT* 21 (1971): 311-25.

²² **tn** The word רַבִּים (*rabbim*), here rendered “crowd,” is also used infrequently to refer to the “mighty,” people of importance in society (Job 35:9; cf. Lev 19:15).

²³ **tn** For any individual to join a group that is bent on acting wickedly would be a violation of the Law and would incur personal responsibility.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “you will not answer in a lawsuit to turn after the crowd to turn.” The form translated “agrees with” (*Heb* “to turn after”) is a Qal infinitive construct from נָתַח (*natah*); the same root is used at the end of the verse but as a Hiphil infinitive construct, “to pervert [justice].”

²⁵ **tn** The point here is one of false sympathy and honor, the bad sense of the word הָדָר (*hadar*; see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 237).

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “meet” (so KJV, ASV, NASB).

²⁷ **tn** The construction uses the imperfect tense (taken here as an obligatory imperfect) and the infinitive absolute for emphasis.

you must not ignore him,¹ but be sure to help² him with it.³

23:6 “You must not turn away justice for your poor people in their lawsuits. **23:7** Keep your distance⁴ from a false charge⁵ – do not kill the innocent and the righteous,⁶ for I will not justify the wicked.⁷

23:8 “You must not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see⁸ and subverts the words of the righteous.

23:9 “You must not oppress⁹ a foreigner, since you know the life¹⁰ of a foreigner, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

Sabbaths and Feasts

23:10¹¹ “For six years¹² you are to sow your land and gather in its produce. **23:11** But in the seventh year¹³ you must let it lie fallow and leave it alone so that the poor of your people may eat, and what they leave any animal in the field¹⁴ may eat; you must do likewise with your vineyard and your olive grove. **23:12** For six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you must cease, in order that your ox and your donkey may rest and that your female ser-

vant’s son and any hired help¹⁵ may refresh themselves.¹⁶

23:13 “Pay attention to do¹⁷ everything I have told you, and do not even mention¹⁸ the names of other gods – do not let them be heard on your lips.¹⁹

23:14 “Three times²⁰ in the year you must make a pilgrim feast²¹ to me. **23:15** You are to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; seven days²² you must eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you, at the appointed time of the month of Abib, for at that time²³ you came out of Egypt. No one may appear before²⁴ me empty-handed.

23:16 “You are also to observe²⁵ the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors that you have sown in the field, and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year²⁶ when you have gathered in²⁷ your harvest²⁸ out of the field. **23:17** At²⁹ three times in the year all your males will appear before the Lord God.³⁰

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “alien,” or “resident foreigner.” Such an individual would have traveled out of need and depended on the goodwill of the people around him. The rendering “hired help” assumes that the foreigner is mentioned in this context because he is working for an Israelite and will benefit from the Sabbath rest, along with his employer.

¹⁶ **tn** The verb is *וַיִּנְחֵם* (*v’yinnafesh*); it is related to the word usually translated “soul” or “life.”

¹⁷ **tn** The phrase “to do” is added; in Hebrew word order the line says, “In all that I have said to you you will watch yourselves.” The verb for paying attention is a Niphal imperfect with an imperatival force.

¹⁸ **tn** Or “honor,” Hiphil of *זָכַר* (*zakhar*). See also Exod 20:25; Josh 23:7; Isa 26:13.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “mouth.”

²⁰ **sn** See also Ps 16:4, where David affirms his loyalty to God with this expression.

²¹ **tn** The expression rendered “three times” is really “three feet,” or “three foot-beats.” The expression occurs only a few times in the Law. The expression is an adverbial accusative.

²² **tn** This is the word *חֲגֻג* (*takhog*) from the root *חָגַג* (*khagag*); it describes a feast that was accompanied by a pilgrimage. It was first used by Moses in his appeal that Israel go three days into the desert to hold such a feast.

²³ **tn** This is an adverbial accusative of time.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “in it.”

²⁵ **tn** The verb is a Niphal imperfect; the nuance of permission works well here – no one is permitted to appear before God empty (*Heb* “and they will not appear before me empty”).

²⁶ **tn** The words “you are also to observe” are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁷ **tn** An infinitive construct with a preposition and a pronominal suffix is used to make a temporal clause: “in the going in of the year.” The word “year” is the subjective genitive, the subject of the clause.

²⁸ **tn** An infinitive construct with a preposition and a pronominal suffix is used to make a temporal clause: “in the ingathering of you.”

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* “gathered in your labors.” This is a metonymy of cause put for the effect. “Labors” are not gathered in, but what the labors produced – the harvest.

³⁰ **tn** Adverbial accusative of time: “three times” becomes “at three times.”

³¹ **tn** Here the divine Name reads in Hebrew *יְהוָה יְהוָה* (*ha’adon y’hvah*), which if rendered according to the traditional scheme of “LORD” for “Yahweh” would result in “LORD LORD.” A number of English versions therefore render this phrase “Lord God,” and that convention has been followed here.

¹ **tn** The line reads “you will cease to forsake him” – refrain from leaving your enemy without help.

² **tn** The law is emphatic here as well, using the infinitive absolute and the imperfect of instruction (or possibly obligation). There is also a wordplay here: two words *אָזַב* (*’azav*) are used, one meaning “forsake” and the other possibly meaning “arrange” based on Arabic and Ugaritic evidence (see U. Casuto, *Exodus*, 297-98).

³ **sn** See H. B. Huffmon, “Exodus 23:4-5: A Comparative Study,” *A Light Unto My Path*, 271-78.

⁴ **tn** Or “stay away from,” or “have nothing to do with.”

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “a false matter,” this expression in this context would have to be a case in law that was false or that could only be won by falsehood.

⁶ **tn** The two clauses probably should be related: the getting involved in the false charge could lead to the death of an innocent person (so, e.g., Naboth in 1 Kgs 21:10-13).

⁷ **tn** God will not declare right the one who is in the wrong. Society should also be consistent, but it cannot see the intents and motives, as God can.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “blinds the open-eyed.”

⁹ **tn** The verb means “to crush.” S. R. Driver notes that in this context this would probably mean with an unfair judgment in the courts (*Exodus*, 239).

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “soul, life” – “you know what it feels like.”

¹¹ **sn** This section concerns religious duties of the people of God as they worship by giving thanks to God for their blessings. The principles here are: God requires his people to allow the poor to share in their bounty (10-11); God requires his people to provide times of rest and refreshment for those who labor for them (12); God requires allegiance to himself (13); God requires his people to come before him in gratitude and share their bounty (14-17); God requires that his people safeguard proper worship forms (18-19).

¹² **tn** *Heb* “and six years”; this is an adverbial accusative telling how long they can work their land. The following references to years and days in vv. 10-12 function similarly.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “and the seventh year”; an adverbial accusative with a disjunctive *vav* (ו).

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “living thing/creature/beast of the field.” A general term for animals, usually wild animals, including predators (cf. v. 29; Gen 2:19-20; Lev 26:22; Deut 7:22; 1 Sam 17:46; Job 5:22-23; Ezek 29:5; 34:5).

23:18 “You must not offer¹ the blood of my sacrifice with bread containing yeast; the fat of my festal sacrifice must not remain until morning.²
23:19 The first of the firstfruits of your soil you must bring to the house of the LORD your God.

“You must not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.³

The Angel of the Presence

23:20⁴ “I am going to send⁵ an angel⁶ before you to protect you as you journey⁷ and to bring you into the place that I have prepared.⁸
23:21 Take heed because of him, and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name⁹ is in him.

¹ **tn** The verb is תִּזְבַּחַת (*tizbakh*), an imperfect tense from the same root as the genitive that qualifies the accusative “blood”: “you will not sacrifice the blood of my sacrifice.” The verb means “to slaughter”; since one cannot slaughter blood, a more general translation is required here. But if the genitive is explained as “my blood-sacrifice” (a genitive of specification; like “the evil of your doings” in Isa 1:16), then a translation of sacrifice would work (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 304).

² **sn** See N. Snaith, “Exodus 23:18 and 34:25,” *JTS* 20 (1969): 533-34; see also M. Haran, “The Passover Sacrifice,” *Studies in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (VTSup), 86-116.

³ **sn** On this verse, see C. M. Carmichael, “On Separating Life and Death: An Explanation of Some Biblical Laws,” *HTR* 69 (1976): 1-7; J. Milgrom, “You Shall Not Boil a Kid in Its Mother’s Milk,” *BRev* 1 (1985): 48-55; R. J. Ratner and B. Zuckerman, “In Rereading the ‘Kid in Milk’ Inscriptions,” *BRev* 1 (1985): 56-58; and M. Haran, “Seething a Kid in Its Mother’s Milk,” *JJS* 30 (1979): 23-35. Here and at 34:26, where this command is repeated, it ends a series of instructions about procedures for worship.

⁴ **sn** This passage has some of the most interesting and perplexing expressions and constructions in the book. It is largely promise, but it is part of the Law and so demands compliance by faith. Its points are: God promises to send his angel to prepare the way before his obedient servants (20-23); God promises blessing for his loyal servants (24-33). So in the section one learns that God promises his protection (victory) and blessing (through his angel) for his obedient and loyal worshippers.

⁵ **tn** The participle הֹנֵה (*himeh*) with the active participle indicates imminent future, something God is about to do.

⁶ **sn** The word is מַלְאָךְ (*mal’akh*, “messenger, angel”). This angel is to be treated with the same fear and respect as Yahweh, for Yahweh will be speaking in him. U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 305-6) says that the words of the first clause do not imply a being distinct from God, for in the ancient world the line of demarcation between the sender and the sent is liable easily to be blurred. He then shows how the “Angel of Yahweh” in Genesis is Yahweh. He concludes that the words here mean “I will guide you.” Christian commentators tend to identify the Angel of Yahweh as the second person of the Trinity (W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:446). However, in addition to being a preincarnate appearance, the word could refer to Yahweh – some manifestation of Yahweh himself.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “protect you in the way.”

⁸ **tn** The form is the Hiphil perfect of the verb בָּוֶן (*kun*, “to establish, prepare”).

⁹ **tn** This means “the manifestation of my being” is in him (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 247). Driver quotes McNeile as saying, “The ‘angel’ is Jehovah Himself ‘in a temporary descent to visibility for a special purpose.’” Others take the “name” to represent Yahweh’s “power” (NCV) or “authority” (NAB, CEV).

23:22 But if you diligently obey him¹⁰ and do all that I command, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and I will be an adversary to your adversaries. **23:23** For my angel will go before you and bring you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I will destroy them completely.¹¹

23:24 “You must not bow down to their gods; you must not serve them or do according to their practices. Instead you must completely overthrow them and smash their standing stones¹² to pieces.¹³

23:25 You must serve¹⁴ the LORD your God, and he¹⁵ will bless your bread and your water,¹⁶ and I will remove sickness from your midst. **23:26** No woman will miscarry her young¹⁷ or be barren in your land. I will fulfill¹⁸ the number of your days.

23:27 “I will send my terror¹⁹ before you, and I will destroy²⁰ all the people whom you encounter; I will make all your enemies turn their backs²¹ to you. **23:28** I will send²² hornets before you that will drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite before you. **23:29** I will not drive them out before you in one year, lest the land

¹⁰ **tn** The infinitive absolute here does not add as great an emphasis as normal, but emphasizes the condition that is being set forth (see GKC 342-43 §113.o).

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “will cut them off” (so KJV, ASV).

¹² **tn** The Hebrew is מַצֵּבֹתֵיהֶם (*matsevothem*, “their standing stones”); these long stones were erected to represent the abode of the numen or deity. They were usually set up near the altar or the high place. To destroy these would be to destroy the centers of Canaanite worship in the land.

¹³ **tn** Both verbs are joined with their infinitive absolutes to provide the strongest sense to these instructions. The images of the false gods in Canaan were to be completely and utterly destroyed. This could not be said any more strongly.

¹⁴ **tn** The perfect tense, masculine plural, with *vav* (י) consecutive is in sequence with the preceding; do not bow down to them, but serve Yahweh. It is then the equivalent of an imperfect of instruction or injunction.

¹⁵ **tn** The LXX reads “and I will bless” to make the verb conform with the speaker, Yahweh.

¹⁶ **sn** On this unusual clause B. Jacob says that it is the reversal of the curse in Genesis, because the “bread and water” represent the field work and ground suitability for abundant blessing of provisions (*Exodus*, 734).

¹⁷ **tn** Or “abort”; *Heb* “cast.”

¹⁸ **sn** No one will die prematurely; this applies to the individual or the nation. The plan of God to bless was extensive, if only the people would obey.

¹⁹ **tn** The word for “terror” is אִמְתִּי (*emati*); the word has the thought of “panic” or “dread.” God would make the nations panic as they heard of the exploits and knew the Israelites were drawing near. U. Cassuto thinks the reference to “hornets” in v. 28 may be a reference to this fear, an unreasonable dread, rather than to another insect invasion (*Exodus*, 308). Others suggest it is symbolic of an invading army or a country like Egypt or literal insects (see E. Neufeld, “Insects as Warfare Agents in the Ancient Near East,” *Or* 49 [1980]: 30-57).

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “kill.”

²¹ **tn** The text has “and I will give all your enemies to you [as] a back.” The verb of making takes two accusatives, the second being the adverbial accusative of product (see GKC 371-72 §117.ii, n. 1).

²² **tn** *Heb* “and I will send.”

become desolate and the wild animals¹ multiply against you. **23:30** Little by little² I will drive them out before you, until you become fruitful and inherit the land. **23:31** I will set³ your boundaries from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River,⁴ for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you.

23:32 “You must make no covenant with them or with their gods. **23:33** They must not live in your land, lest they make you sin against me, for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare⁵ to you.”

The Lord Ratifies the Covenant

24:1⁶ But to Moses the LORD⁷ said, “Come up⁸ to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from a distance.⁹ **24:2** Moses alone may come¹⁰ near the LORD, but the others¹¹ must not

come near.¹² nor may the people go up with him.”

24:3 Moses came¹³ and told the people all the LORD’s words¹⁴ and all the decisions. All the people answered together,¹⁵ “We are willing to do¹⁶ all the words that the LORD has said,” **24:4** and Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Early in the morning he built¹⁷ an altar at the foot¹⁸ of the mountain and arranged¹⁹ twelve standing stones²⁰ – according to the twelve tribes of Israel. **24:5** He sent young Israelite men,²¹ and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls for peace offerings²² to the LORD. **24:6** Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and half of the blood he splashed on the altar. **24:7** He took the Book of the Covenant²⁴

12 tn Now the imperfect tense negated is used; here the prohibition would fit (“they will not come near”), or the obligatory (“they must not”) in which the subjects are obliged to act – or not act in this case.

13 sn The general consensus among commentators is that this refers to Moses’ coming from the mountain after he made the ascent in 20:21. Here he came and told them the laws (written in 20:22-23:33), and of the call to come up to Yahweh.

14 sn The Decalogue may not be included here because the people had heard those commands themselves earlier.

15 tn The text simply has “one voice” (קול אחד, *qol ‘ekhad*); this is an adverbial accusative of manner, telling how the people answered – “in one voice,” or unanimously (see GKC 375 §118.g).

16 tn The verb is the imperfect tense (נִשְׁעָה, *na’aseh*), although the form could be classified as a cohortative. If the latter, they would be saying that they are resolved to do what God said. If it is an imperfect, then the desiderative would make the most sense: “we are willing to do.” They are not presumptuously saying they are going to do all these things.

17 tn The two preterites quite likely form a verbal hendiadys (the verb “to get up early” is frequently in such constructions). Literally it says, “and he got up early [in the morning] and he built”; this means “early [in the morning] he built.” The first verb becomes the adverb.

18 tn “under.”

19 tn The verb “arranged” is not in the Hebrew text but has been supplied to clarify exactly what Moses did with the twelve stones.

20 tn The thing numbered is found in the singular when the number is plural – “twelve standing-stone.” See GKC 433 §134.f. The “standing-stone” could be a small piece about a foot high, or a huge column higher than men. They served to commemorate treaties (Gen 32), or visions (Gen 28) or boundaries, or graves. Here it will function with the altar as a place of worship.

21 tn The construct has “young men of the Israelites,” and so “Israelite” is a genitive that describes them.

22 tn The verbs and their respective accusatives are cognates. First, they offered up burnt offerings (see Lev 1), which is וָעֹלֹתָי (vayya’alu ‘olot); then they sacrificed young bulls as peace sacrifices (Lev 3), which is in Hebrew וַיִּזְבְּחוּ (vayyizb’khu z’vakhim). In the first case the cognate accusative is the direct object; in the second it is an adverbial accusative of product. See on this covenant ritual H. M. Kamsler, “The Blood Covenant in the Bible,” *Dor le Dor* 6 (1977): 94-98; E. W. Nicholson, “The Covenant Ritual in Exodus 24:3-8,” *VT* 32 (1982): 74-86.

23 sn The people and Yahweh through this will be united by blood, for half was splattered on the altar and the other half splattered on/toward the people (v. 8).

24 tn The noun “book” would be the scroll just written containing the laws of chaps. 20-23. On the basis of this scroll the covenant would be concluded here. The reading of this book would assure the people that it was the same that they had agreed to earlier. But now their statement of willingness to obey would be more binding, because their promise would

1 tn Heb “the beast of the field.”

2 tn The repetition expresses an exceptional or super-fine quality (see GKC 396 §123.e).

3 tn The form is a perfect tense with vav consecutive.

4 tn In the Hebrew Bible “the River” usually refers to the Euphrates (cf. NASB, NCV, NRSV, TEV, CEV, NLT). There is some thought that it refers to a river Nahr el Kebir between Lebanon and Syria. See further W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:447; and G. W. Buchanan, *The Consequences of the Covenant* (NovTSup), 91-100.

5 tn The idea of the “snare” is to lure them to judgment; God is apparently warning about contact with the Canaanites, either in worship or in business. They were very syncretistic, and so it would be dangerous to settle among them.

6 sn Exod 24 is the high point of the book in many ways, but most importantly, here Yahweh makes a covenant with the people – the Sinaitic Covenant. The unit not only serves to record the event in Israel’s becoming a nation, but it provides a paradigm of the worship of God’s covenant people – entering into the presence of the glory of Yahweh. See additionally W. A. Maier, “The Analysis of Exodus 24 According to Modern Literary, Form, and Redaction Critical Methodology,” *Springfielder* 37 (1973): 35-52. The passage may be divided into four parts for exposition: vv. 1-2, the call for worship; vv. 3-8, the consecration of the worshipers; vv. 9-11, the confirmation of the covenant; and vv. 12-18, the communication with Yahweh.

7 tn Heb “And he;” the referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

8 sn They were to come up to the LORD after they had made the preparations that are found in vv. 3-8.

9 sn These seventy-four people were to go up the mountain to a certain point. Then they were to prostrate themselves and worship Yahweh as Moses went further up into the presence of Yahweh. Moses occupies the lofty position of mediator (as Christ in the NT), for he alone ascends “to Yahweh” while everyone waits for his return. The emphasis of “bowing down” and that from “far off” stresses again the ominous presence that was on the mountain. This was the holy God – only the designated mediator could draw near to him.

10 tn The verb is a perfect tense with a vav (ו) consecutive; it and the preceding perfect tense follow the imperative, and so have either a force of instruction, or, as taken here, are the equivalent of an imperfect tense (of permission).

11 tn Heb “they.”

and read it aloud⁴ to the people, and they said, “We are willing to do and obey² all that the LORD has spoken.” **24:8** So Moses took the blood and splashed it on³ the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant⁴ that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

24:9 Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up,⁵ **24:10** and they saw⁶ the God of Israel. Under his feet⁷ there was something like a pavement⁸ made of sapphire, clear like the sky itself.⁹ **24:11** But he did not lay a hand¹⁰ on the leaders of the Israelites, so they saw

God,¹¹ and they ate and they drank.¹²

24:12¹³ The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me to the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets¹⁴ with¹⁵ the law and the commandments that I have written, so that you may teach them.”¹⁶ **24:13** So Moses set out¹⁷ with¹⁸ Joshua his attendant, and Moses went up the mountain of God. **24:14** He told the elders, “Wait for us in this place until we return to you. Here are¹⁹ Aaron and Hur with you. Whoever has any matters of dispute²⁰ can approach²¹ them.”

24:15 Moses went up the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. **24:16** The glory of the LORD resided²² on Mount Sinai, and

11 tn The verb is *ראה* (*khazah*); it can mean “to see, perceive” or “see a vision” as the prophets did. The LXX safeguarded this by saying, “appeared in the place of God.” B. Jacob says they beheld – prophetically, religiously (*Exodus*, 746) – but the meaning of that is unclear. The fact that God did not lay a hand on them – to kill them – shows that they saw something that they never expected to see and live. Some Christian interpreters have taken this to refer to a glorious appearance of the preincarnate Christ, the second person of the Trinity. They saw the brilliance of this manifestation – but not the detail. Later, Moses will still ask to see God’s glory – the real presence behind the phenomena.

12 sn This is the covenant meal, the peace offering, that they are eating there on the mountain. To eat from the sacrifice meant that they were at peace with God, in covenant with him. Likewise, in the new covenant believers draw near to God on the basis of sacrifice, and eat of the sacrifice because they are at peace with him, and in Christ they see the Godhead revealed.

13 sn Now the last part is recorded in which Moses ascends to Yahweh to receive the tablets of stone. As Moses disappears into the clouds, the people are given a vision of the glory of Yahweh.

14 sn These are the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments would be written. This is the first time they are mentioned. The commandments were apparently proclaimed by God first and then proclaimed to the people by Moses. Now that they have been formally agreed on and ratified, they will be written by God on stone for a perpetual covenant.

15 tn Or “namely”; or “that is to say.” The *vav* (ו) on the noun does not mean that this is in addition to the tablets of stone; the *vav* is explanatory. Gesenius has “to wit”; see GKC 484-85 §154.a, n. 1(b).

16 tn The last word of the verse is *לְהוֹרֹתָם* (*l^hhorotam*), the Hiphil infinitive construct of *ראה* (*arah*). It serves as a purpose clause, “to teach them,” meaning “I am giving you this Law and these commands in order that you may teach them.” This duty to teach the Law will be passed especially to parents (Deut 6:6-9, 20-25) and to the tribe of Levi as a whole (Deut 33:9-10; Mal 2:1-9).

17 tn Heb “and he arose” meaning “started to go.”

18 tn Heb “and.”

19 tn The word *הִנֵּה* (*hinneh*) calls attention to the presence of Aaron and Hur to answer the difficult cases that might come up.

20 tn Or “issues to resolve.” The term is simply *דְּבָרִים* (*d^evarim*, “words, things, matters”).

21 tn The imperfect tense here has the nuance of potential imperfect. In the absence of Moses and Joshua, Aaron and Hur will be available.

sn Attention to the preparation for Moses’ departure contributes to the weight of the guilt of the faithless Israelites (chap. 32) and of Aaron, to whom Moses had delegated an important duty.

22 sn The verb is *וַיִּשְׁבֶּן* (*vayyishkon*, “and dwelt, abode”). From this is derived the epithet “the Shekinah Glory,” the dwelling or abiding glory. The “glory of Yahweh” was a display visible at a distance, clearly in view of the Israelites. To them it was like a consuming fire in the midst of the cloud that cov-

be confirmed by a covenant of blood.

1 tn Heb “read it in the ears of.”

2 tn A second verb is now added to the people’s response, and it is clearly an imperfect and not a cohortative, lending support for the choice of desiderative imperfect in these commitments – “we want to obey.” This was their compliance with the covenant.

3 tn Given the size of the congregation, the preposition might be rendered here “toward the people” rather than on them (all).

4 sn The construct relationship “the blood of the covenant” means “the blood by which the covenant is ratified” (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 254). The parallel with the inauguration of the new covenant in the blood of Christ is striking (see, e.g., Matt 26:28, 1 Cor 11:25). When Jesus was inaugurating the new covenant, he was bringing to an end the old.

5 tn The verse begins with “and Moses went up, and Aaron....” This verse may supply the sequel to v. 1-2. At any rate, God was now accepting them into his presence.

sn This next section is extremely interesting, but difficult to interpret. For some of the literature, see: E. W. Nicholson, “The Interpretation of Exodus 24:9-11,” VT 24 (1974): 77-97; “The Antiquity of the Tradition in Exodus 24:9-11,” VT 26 (1976): 148-60; and T. C. Vriezen, “The Exegesis of Exodus 24:9-11,” OTS 17 (1967): 24-53.

6 sn S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 254) wishes to safeguard the traditional idea that God could not be seen by reading “they saw the place where the God of Israel stood” so as not to say they saw God. But according to U. Cassuto there is not a great deal of difference between “and they saw the God” and “the LORD God appeared” (*Exodus*, 314). He thinks that the word “God” is used instead of “Yahweh” to say that a divine phenomenon was seen. It is in the LXX that they add “the place where he stood.” In v. 11b the LXX has “and they appeared in the place of God.” See James Barr, “Theophany and Anthropomorphism in the Old Testament,” VTSup 7 (1959): 31-33. There is no detailed description here of what they saw (cf. Isa 6; Ezek 1). What is described amounts to what a person could see when prostrate.

7 sn S. R. Driver suggests that they saw the divine Glory, not directly, but as they looked up from below, through what appeared to be a transparent blue sapphire pavement (*Exodus*, 254).

8 tn Or “tiles.”

9 tn Heb “and like the body of heaven for clearness.” The Hebrew term *שָׁמַיִם* (*shamayim*) may be translated “heaven” or “sky” depending on the context; here, where sapphire is mentioned (a blue stone) “sky” seems more appropriate, since the transparent blueness of the sapphire would appear like the blueness of the cloudless sky.

10 tn Heb “hedidnotstretchouthis hand,” i.e., to destroy them.

the cloud covered it for six days.¹ On the seventh day he called to Moses from within the cloud. **24:17** Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in plain view² of the people. **24:18** Moses went into the cloud when he went up³ the mountain, and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.⁴

The Materials for the Sanctuary

25:1⁵ The LORD spoke to Moses: **25:2** “Tell the Israelites to take⁶ an offering⁷ for me; from

ered the mountain. That fire indicated that Yahweh wished to accept their sacrifice, as if it were a pleasant aroma to him, as Leviticus would say. This “appearance” indicated that the phenomena represented a shimmer of the likeness of his glory (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 749). The verb, according to U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 316), also gives an inkling of the next section of the book, the building of the “tabernacle,” the dwelling place, the *מִשְׁכָּן* (*nishkan*). The vision of the glory of Yahweh confirmed the authority of the revelation of the Law given to Israel. This chapter is the climax of God’s bringing people into covenant with himself, the completion of his revelation to them, a completion that is authenticated with the miraculous. It ends with the mediator going up in the clouds to be with God, and the people down below eagerly awaiting his return. The message of the whole chapter could be worded this way: Those whom God sanctifies by the blood of the covenant and instructs by the book of the covenant may enjoy fellowship with him and anticipate a far more glorious fellowship. So too in the NT the commandments and teachings of Jesus are confirmed by his miraculous deeds and by his glorious manifestation on the Mount of the Transfiguration, where a few who represented the disciples would see his glory and be able to teach others. The people of the new covenant have been brought into fellowship with God through the blood of the covenant; they wait eagerly for his return from heaven in the clouds.

1 tn This is an adverbial accusative of time.

2 tn *Heb* “to the eyes of” which could mean in their opinion.

3 tn The verb is a preterite with *vav* (ו) consecutive; here, the second clause, is subordinated to the first preterite, because it seems that the entering into the cloud is the dominant point in this section of the chapter.

4 sn B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 750) offers this description of some of the mystery involved in Moses’ ascending into the cloud: Moses ascended into the presence of God, but remained on earth. He did not rise to heaven – the ground remained firmly under his feet. But he clearly was brought into God’s presence; he was like a heavenly servant before God’s throne, like the angels, and he consumed neither bread nor water. The purpose of his being there was to become familiar with all God’s demands and purposes. He would receive the tablets of stone and all the instructions for the tabernacle that was to be built (beginning in chap. 25). He would not descend until the sin of the golden calf.

5 sn Now begin the detailed instructions for constructing the tabernacle of Yahweh, with all its furnishings. The first paragraph introduces the issue of the heavenly pattern for the construction, calls for the people to make willing offerings (vv. 2-7), and explains the purpose for these offerings (vv. 8-9). The message here is that God calls his people to offer of their substance willingly so that his sanctuary may be made.

6 tn The verb is *יִקְחוּ* (*v⁶yiqkhu*), the Qal imperfect or jussive with *vav*; after the imperative “speak” this verb indicates the purpose or result: “speak...that they may take” and continues with the force of a command.

7 tn The “offering” (*תְּרוּמָה*, *ṯrumah*) is perhaps better understood as a contribution since it was a freewill offering. There is some question about the etymology of the word. The traditional meaning of “heave-offering” derives from the idea of “elevation,” a root meaning “to be high” lying behind the word. B. Jacob says it is something sorted out of a mass of material and designated for a higher purpose (*Exodus*, 765).

every person motivated by a willing⁸ heart you⁹ are to receive my offering. **25:3** This is the offering you¹⁰ are to accept from them: gold, silver, bronze, **25:4** blue,¹¹ purple,¹² scarlet,¹³ fine linen,¹⁴ goat’s hair,¹⁵ **25:5** ram skins dyed red,¹⁶ fine leather,¹⁷ acacia¹⁸ wood, **25:6** oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for fragrant incense, **25:7** onyx stones, and other gems to be set in the ephod and in the breastpiece. **25:8** Let

S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 263) corrects the idea of “heave-offering” by relating the root to the Hiphil form of that root, *herim*, “to lift” or “take off.” He suggests the noun means “what is taken off” from a larger mass and so designated for sacred purposes. The LXX has “something taken off.”

8 tn The verb *יִדְבֹנוּ* (*yidd⁸vennu*) is related to the word for the “freewill offering” (*דָּבָה*, *davah*). The verb is used of volunteering for military campaigns (Judg 5:2, 9) and the willing offerings for both the first and second temples (see 1 Chr 29:5, 6, 9, 14, 17).

9 tn The pronoun is plural.

10 tn The pronoun is plural.

11 sn The blue refers to dye made from shellfish. It has a dark blue or purple-blue, almost violet color. No significance for the color is attached.

12 sn Likewise this color dye was imported from Phoenicia, where it was harvested from the shellfish or snail. It is a deep purple-red color.

13 sn This color is made from the eggs and bodies of the worm *coccus ilicis*, which is found with the holly plant – so *Heb* “worm of brilliance.” The powder made from the dried maggots produces a bright red-yellow color (W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:452). B. Jacob takes the view that these are not simply colors that are being introduced here, but fabrics dyed with these colors (*Exodus*, 765). At any rate, the sequence would then be metals, fabrics, and leathers (v. 5).

14 sn This is generally viewed as a fine Egyptian linen that had many more delicate strands than ordinary linen.

15 sn Goat’s hair was spun into yarn (35:26) and used to make the material for the first tent over the dwelling. It is ideal for tenting, since it is loosely woven and allows breezes to pass through, but with rain the fibers expand and prevent water from seeping through.

16 sn W. C. Kaiser compares this to morocco leather (“Exodus,” *EBC* 2:453); it was skin that had all the wool removed and then was prepared as leather and dyed red. N. M. Sarna, on the other hand, comments, “The technique of leather production is never described [in ancient Hebrew texts]. Hence, it is unclear whether Hebrew *me’oddamim* (מֵעֹדָמִים), literally ‘made red,’ refers to the tanning or dyeing process” (*Exodus* [JPSTC], 157).

17 tn The meaning of the word *תְּרוּשִׁים* (*ṯkhashim*) is debated. The Arabic *uhas* or *dahas* is a dolphin, and so some think a sea animal is meant – something like a dolphin or porpoise (cf. NASB; ASV “sealskins”; NIV “hides of sea cows”). Porpoises are common in the Red Sea; their skins are used for clothing by the bedouin. The word has also been connected to an Egyptian word for “leather” (*ths*); see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 265. Some variation of this is followed by NRSV (“fine leather”) and NLT (“fine goatskin leather”). Another suggestion connects this word to an Akkadian one that describes a precious stone that is yellow or orange and also leather dyed with the color of this stone (N. M. Sarna, *Exodus* [JPSTC], 157-58).

18 sn The wood of the acacia is darker and harder than oak, and so very durable.

them make⁴ for me a sanctuary,² so that I may live among them. **25:9** According to all that I am showing you³ – the pattern of the tabernacle⁴ and the pattern of all its furnishings – you⁵ must make it exactly so.⁶

The Ark of the Covenant

25:10 “They are to make an ark⁸ of acacia wood – its length is to be three feet nine inches, its width two feet three inches, and its height two feet three inches.⁹ **25:11** You are to overlay¹⁰ it with pure gold – both inside and outside you must overlay it,¹¹ and you are to make a surrounding border¹² of gold over it. **25:12** You are to cast four gold rings for it and put them on its four feet, with two rings on one side and two rings on the other side. **25:13** You are to make poles of acacia wood, overlay them with gold, **25:14** and put the poles into the rings at the sides of the ark in order to carry the ark with them. **25:15** The poles must remain in the rings of the ark; they must not be removed from it. **25:16** You are to put into the ark the testimony¹³ that I will give to you.

¹ **tn** The verb is a perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive; it follows in the sequence initiated by the imperative in v. 2 and continues with the force of a command.

² **tn** The word here is *מִקְדָּשׁ* (*miqdash*), “a sanctuary” or “holy place”; cf. NLT “sacred residence.” The purpose of building it is to enable Yahweh to reside (*וַשְׁכַּנְתִּי*, *shakhanti*) in their midst. U. Cassuto reminds the reader that God did not need a place to dwell, but the Israelites needed a dwelling place for him, so that they would look to it and be reminded that he was in their midst (*Exodus*, 327).

³ **tn** The pronoun is singular.

⁴ **sn** The expression “the pattern of the tabernacle” (*תְּבִינֹתָ הַמִּשְׁכָּן*, *tavnit hammiskan*) has been the source of much inquiry. The word rendered “pattern” is related to the verb “to build”; it suggests a model. S. R. Driver notes that in ancient literature there is the account of Gudea receiving in a dream a complete model of a temple he was to erect (*Exodus*, 267). In this passage Moses is being shown something on the mountain that should be the pattern of the earthly sanctuary. The most plausible explanation of what he was shown comes from a correlation with comments in the Letter to the Hebrews and the book of Revelation, which describe the heavenly sanctuary as the true sanctuary, and the earthly as the copy or shadow. One could say that Moses was allowed to see what John saw on the island of Patmos, a vision of the heavenly sanctuary. That still might not explain what it was, but it would mean he saw a revelation of the true tent, and that would imply that he learned of the spiritual and eternal significance of all of it. The fact that Israel’s sanctuary resembled those of other cultures does not nullify this act of revelation; rather, it raises the question of where the other nations got their ideas if it was not made known early in human history. One can conclude that in the beginning there was much more revealed to the parents in the garden than Scripture tells about (Cain and Abel did know how to make sacrifices before Leviticus legislated it). Likewise, one cannot but guess at the influence of the fallen Satan and his angels in the world of pagan religion. Whatever the source, at Sinai God shows the true, and instructs that it all be done without the pagan corruptions and additions. U. Cassuto notes that the existence of these ancient parallels shows that the section on the tabernacle need not be dated in the second temple period, but fits the earlier period well (*Exodus*, 324).

⁵ **tn** The pronoun is plural.

⁶ **sn** Among the many helpful studies on the tabernacle, include S. M. Fish, “And They Shall Build Me a Sanctuary,” *Gratz College of Jewish Studies* 2 (1973): 43-59; I. Hart, “Preaching on the Account of the Tabernacle,” *EvQ* 54 (1982): 111-16; D. Skinner, “Some Major Themes of Exodus,” *Mid-America Theological Journal* 1 (1977): 31-42; S. McEvenue, “The Style of Building Instructions,” *Sem* 4 (1974): 1-9; M. Ben-Uri, “The Mosaic Building Code,” *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 19 (1982): 36-39.

⁷ **sn** This section begins with the ark, the most sacred and important object of Israel’s worship. Verses 10-15 provide the instructions for it, v. 16 has the placement of the Law in it, vv. 17-21 cover the mercy lid, and v. 22 the meeting above it. The point of this item in the tabernacle is to underscore the focus: the covenant people must always have God’s holy standard before them as they draw near to worship. A study of this would focus on God’s nature (he is a God of order, precision, and perfection), on the usefulness of this item for worship, and on the typology intended.

⁸ **tn** The word “ark” has long been used by English translations to render *אֲרוֹן* (*aron*), the word used for the wooden “box,” or “chest,” made by Noah in which to escape the flood and by the Israelites to furnish the tabernacle.

⁹ **tn** The size is two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. The size in feet and inches is estimated on the assumption that the cubit is 18 inches (see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 267).

¹⁰ **tn** The verbs throughout here are perfect tenses with the *vav* (ו) consecutives. They are equal to the imperfect tense of instruction and/or injunction.

¹¹ **tn** Here the verb is an imperfect tense; for the perfect sequence to work the verb would have to be at the front of the clause.

¹² **tn** The word *זֶר* (*zer*) is used only in Exodus and seems to describe something on the order of a crown molding, an ornamental border running at the top of the chest on all four sides. There is no indication of its appearance or function.

¹³ **sn** The “testimony” is the Decalogue (Exod 24:12; 31:18; Deut 4:13; 9:9; 1 Kgs 8:9); the word identifies it as the witness or affirmation of God’s commandments belonging to his covenant with Israel. It expressed God’s will and man’s duty. In other cultures important documents were put at the feet of the gods in the temples.

25:17 “You are to make an atonement lid¹ of pure gold;² its length is to be three feet nine inches, and its width is to be two feet three inches. **25:18** You are to make two cherubim³ of gold; you are to make them of hammered metal on the two ends of the atonement lid. **25:19** Make⁴ one cherub on one end⁵ and one cherub on the other end; from the atonement lid⁶ you are to make the cherubim on the two ends. **25:20** The cherubim are to be spreading their wings upward, overshadowing⁷ the atonement lid with their wings, and the cherubim are to face each other,⁸ looking⁹ toward the atonement lid. **25:21** You are to put the atonement lid on top of the ark, and in the ark you are to put the testimony I am giving you. **25:22** I will meet with you there,¹⁰

and¹¹ from above the atonement lid, from between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will command you for the Israelites.

The Table for the Bread of the Presence

25:23¹² “You are to make a table of acacia wood; its length is to be three feet, its width one foot six inches, and its height two feet three inches. **25:24** You are to overlay it with¹³ pure gold, and you are to make a surrounding border of gold for it. **25:25** You are to make a surrounding frame¹⁴ for it about three inches broad, and you are to make a surrounding border of gold for its frame. **25:26** You are to make four rings of gold for it and attach¹⁵ the rings at the four corners where its four legs are.¹⁶ **25:27** The rings are to be close to the frame to provide places¹⁷ for the poles to carry the table. **25:28** You are to make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold, so that the table may be carried with

1 tn The noun is כַּפֹּרֶת (*kapporet*), translated “atonement lid” or “atonement plate.” The traditional translation “mercy-seat” (so KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV) came from Tyndale in 1530 and was also used by Luther in 1523. The noun is formed from the word “to make atonement.” The item that the Israelites should make would be more than just a lid for the ark. It would be the place where atonement was signified. The translation of “covering” is probably incorrect, for it derives from a rare use of the verb, if the same verb at all (the evidence shows “cover” is from another root with the same letters as this). The value of this place was that Yahweh sat enthroned above it, and so the ark essentially was the “footstool.” Blood was applied to the lid of the box, for that was the place of atonement (see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 269-270).

2 tn After verbs of making or producing, the accusative (like “gold” here) may be used to express the material from which something is made (see GKC 371 §117. *hh*).

3 tn The evidence suggests that the cherubim were composite angelic creatures that always indicated the nearness of God. So here images of them were to be crafted and put on each end of the ark of the covenant to signify that they were there. Ezekiel 1 describes four cherubim as each having human faces, four wings, and parts of different animals for their bodies. Traditions of them appear in the other cultures as well. They serve to guard the holy places and to bear the throne of God. Here they were to be beaten out as part of the lid.

4 tn The text now shifts to use an imperative with the *vav* (י) conjunction.

5 tn The use of זֶה (*zeh*) repeated here expresses the reciprocal ideas of “the one” and “the other” (see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 26, §132).

6 sn The angels were to form one piece with the lid and not be separated. This could be translated “of one piece with” the lid, but it is likely the angels were simply fastened to it permanently.

7 tn The verb means “overshadowing, screening” in the sense of guarding (see 1 Kgs 8:7; 1 Chr 28:18; see also the account in Gen 3:24). The cherubim then signify two things here: by their outstretched wings they form the throne of God who sits above the ark (with the Law under his feet), and by their overshadowing and guarding they signify this as the place of atonement where people must find propitiation to commune with God. Until then they are barred from his presence. See U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 330-35.

8 tn Heb “their faces a man to his brother.”

9 tn Heb “the faces of the cherubim will be” (“the cherubim” was moved to the preceding clause for smoother English).

10 sn Here then is the main point of the ark of the covenant, and the main point of all worship – meeting with God through atonement. The text makes it clear that here God would meet with Moses (“you” is singular) and then he would speak to the people – he is the mediator of the covenant. S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 272) makes the point that the verb here is not the word that means “to meet by chance” (as in Exod 3:18), but “to meet” by appointment for a purpose (יָבִיאוּתִי, *v^ono’adi*). The parallel in the NT is Jesus Christ and his work. The theology

is that the Law condemns people as guilty of sin, but the sacrifice of Christ makes atonement. So he is the “place of propitiation (Rom 3:25) who gains communion with the Father for sinners. A major point that could be made from this section is this: At the center of worship must be the atoning work of Christ – a perpetual reminder of God’s righteous standard (the testimony in the ark) and God’s gracious provision (the atonement lid).

11 tn The verb is placed here in the text: “and I will speak”; it has been moved in this translation to be closer to the direct object clause.

12 sn The Table of the Bread of the Presence (Tyndale’s translation, “Shewbread,” was used in KJV and influenced ASV, NAB) was to be a standing acknowledgment that Yahweh was the giver of daily bread. It was called the “presence-bread” because it was set out in his presence. The theology of this is that God provides, and the practice of this is that the people must provide for constant thanks. So if the ark speaks of communion through atonement, the table speaks of dedicatory gratitude.

13 tn “Gold” is an adverbial accusative of material.

14 sn There is some debate as to the meaning of מִסְגֵּרֶת (*misgeret*). This does not seem to be a natural part of the table and its legs. The drawing on the Arch of Titus shows two cross-stays in the space between the legs, about halfway up. It might have been nearer the top, but the drawing of the table of presence-bread from the arch shows it half-way up. This frame was then decorated with the molding as well.

15 tn Heb “give.”

16 tn Heb “which [are] to four of its feet.”

17 tn Heb “houses”; NAB, NASB “holders.”

them.¹ 25:29 You are to make its plates,² its ladles,³ its pitchers, and its bowls, to be used in pouring out offerings;⁴ you are to make them of pure gold. 25:30 You are to set the Bread of the Presence⁵ on the table before me continually.

The Lampstand

25:31⁶ “You are to make a lampstand⁷ of pure gold. The lampstand is to be made of hammered metal; its base and its shaft, its cups,⁸ its buds, and its blossoms are to be from the same piece.⁹ 25:32 Six branches are to extend from the sides of the lampstand,¹⁰ three branches of the lampstand from one side of it and three branches of the lampstand from the other side of it.¹¹ 25:33 Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on one branch, and three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on the next¹² branch, and the same¹³ for the six branches extending from

the lampstand. 25:34 On the lampstand there are to be four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms, 25:35 with a bud under the first¹⁴ two branches from it, and a bud under the next¹⁵ two branches from it, and a bud under the third¹⁶ two branches from it, according to the six branches that extend from the lampstand. 25:36 Their buds and their branches will be one piece,¹⁷ all of it one hammered piece of pure gold.

25:37 “You are to make its seven lamps,¹⁸ and then set¹⁹ its lamps up on it, so that it will give light²⁰ to the area in front of it. 25:38 Its trimmers and its trays²¹ are to be²² of pure gold. 25:39 About seventy-five pounds²³ of pure gold is to be used for it²⁴ and for all these utensils. 25:40 Now be sure to make²⁵ them according to the pattern you were shown²⁶ on the mountain.²⁷

¹ tn The verb is a Niphal perfect with vav consecutive, showing here the intended result: “so that [the table] might be lifted up [by them].” The noun “the table” is introduced by what looks like the sign of the accusative, but here it serves to introduce or emphasize the nominative (see GKC 365 §117.).

² tn Or “a deep gold dish.” The four nouns in this list are items associated with the table and its use.

³ tn Or “cups” (NAB, TEV).

⁴ tn The expression “for pouring out offerings” represents Hebrew אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׁקוּ בָהֶן יִשָּׁקוּ (asher yussakh bahen). This literally says, “which it may be poured out with them,” or “with which [libations] may be poured out.”

⁵ sn The name basically means that the bread is to be set out in the presence of Yahweh. The custom of presenting bread on a table as a thank offering is common in other cultures as well. The bread here would be placed on the table as a symbol of the divine provision for the twelve tribes – continually, because they were to express their thanksgiving continually. Priests could eat the bread after certain times. Fresh bread would be put there regularly.

⁶ sn Clearly the point here is to provide light in the tent for access to God. He provided for his worshipers a light for the way to God, but he also wanted them to provide oil for the lamp to ensure that the light would not go out. Verses 31-36 describe the piece. It was essentially one central shaft, with three branches on either side turned out and upward. The stem and the branches were ornamented every so often with gold that was formed into the shape of the calyx and corolla of the almond flower. On top of the central shaft and the six branches were the lamps.

⁷ tn The word is מְנֹרָה (mēnorah) – here in construct to a following genitive of material. The main piece was one lampstand, but there were seven lamps on the shaft and its branches. See E. Goodenough, “The Menorah among the Jews of the Roman World,” *HUCA* 23 (1950/51): 449-92.

⁸ sn U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 342-44) says that the description “the cups, knobs and flowers” is explained in vv. 32-36 as three decorations in the form of a cup, shaped like an almond blossom, to be made on one branch. Every cup will have two parts, (a) a knob, that is, the receptacle at the base of the blossom, and (b) a flower, which is called the corolla, so that each lamp rests on top of a flower.

⁹ tn Heb “will be from/of it”; the referent (“the same piece” of wrought metal) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁰ tn Heb “from the sides of it.”

¹¹ tn Heb “from the second side.”

¹² tn The text uses “one” again; “the one...the one” means “the one...and the next” in the distributive sense.

¹³ tn Heb “thus.”

¹⁴ tn For clarity the phrase “the first” has been supplied.

¹⁵ tn For clarity the phrase “the next” has been supplied.

¹⁶ tn For clarity the phrase “the third” has been supplied.

¹⁷ tn Heb “will be from it.”

¹⁸ tn The word for “lamps” is from the same root as the lampstand, of course. The word is נֵרוֹת (nerot). This probably refers to the small saucer-like pottery lamps that are made very simply with the rim pinched over to form a place to lay the wick. The bowl is then filled with olive oil as fuel.

¹⁹ tn The translation “set up on” is from the Hebrew verb “bring up.” The construction is impersonal, “and he will bring up,” meaning “one will bring up.” It may mean that people were to fix the lamps on to the shaft and the branches, rather than cause the light to go up (see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 277).

²⁰ tn This is a Hiphil perfect with vav consecutive, from אָרַר (‘or, “light”), and in the causative, “to light, give light.”

²¹ sn The first word refers to something like small tongs or tweezers used to pull up and trim the wicks; the second word refers to fire-pans or censers.

²² tn “are to be” has been supplied.

²³ tn Heb “a talent.”

²⁴ tn The text has “he will make it” or “one will make it.” With no expressed subject it is given a passive translation.

²⁵ tn The text uses two imperatives: “see and make.” This can be interpreted as a verbal hendiadys, calling for Moses and Israel to see to it that they make these things correctly.

²⁶ tn The participle is passive, “caused to see,” or, “shown.”

²⁷ sn The message of this section surely concerns access to God. To expound this correctly, though, since it is an instruction section for building the lampstand, the message would be: God requires that his people ensure that light will guide the way of access to God. The breakdown for exposition could be the instructions for preparation for light (one lamp, several branches), then instructions for the purpose and maintenance of the lamps, and then the last verse telling the divine source for the instructions. Naturally, the metaphorical value of light will come up in the study, especially from the NT. So in the NT there is the warning that if churches are unfaithful God will remove their lampstand, their ministry (Rev 2-3).

The Tabernacle

26:1¹ “The tabernacle itself² you are to make with³ ten curtains of fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet,⁴ you are to make them with⁵ cherubim that are the work of an artistic designer. **26:2** The length of each⁶ curtain is to be forty-two feet, and the width of each curtain is to be six feet⁷ – the same size for each of the curtains. **26:3** Five curtains are to be joined,⁸ one to another,⁹ and the other¹⁰ five curtains are to be joined, one to another. **26:4** You are to make loops of blue material along the edge of the end curtain in one set, and in the same way you are to make loops¹¹ in the outer edge of the end curtain in the second set. **26:5** You are to make fifty loops on the one curtain, and you are to make fifty loops on the end curtain which is on the second set, so that the loops are opposite one to another.¹² **26:6** You are to make fifty gold clasps and join the curtains together with the clasps, so that the tabernacle is a unit.¹³

26:7 “You are to make curtains of goats’ hair¹⁴

for a tent over the tabernacle;¹⁵ you are to make¹⁶ eleven curtains. **26:8** The length of each¹⁷ curtain is to be forty-five feet, and the width of each curtain is to be six feet – the same size for the eleven curtains. **26:9** You are to join five curtains by themselves and six curtains by themselves. You are to double over¹⁸ the sixth curtain at the front of the tent. **26:10** You are to make fifty loops along the edge of the end curtain in one set and fifty loops along the edge of the curtain that joins the second set. **26:11** You are to make fifty bronze clasps and put the clasps into the loops and join the tent together so that it is a unit.¹⁹ **26:12** Now the part that remains of the curtains of the tent – the half curtain that remains will hang over at the back of the tabernacle.²⁰ **26:13** The foot and a half²¹ on the one side and the foot and a half on the other side of what remains in the length of the curtains of the tent will hang over the sides of the tabernacle, on one side and the other side, to cover it.²²

26:14 “You are to make a covering²³ for the tent out of ram skins dyed red and over that a covering of fine leather.²⁴

1 sn This chapter is given over to the details of the structure itself, the curtains, coverings, boards and walls and veil. The passage can be studied on one level for its function both practically and symbolically for Israel’s worship. On another level it can be studied for its typology, for the tabernacle and many of its parts speak of Christ. For this one should see the commentaries.

2 tn The word order in Hebrew thrusts the direct object to the front for particular emphasis. After the first couple of pieces of furniture are treated (chap. 25), attention turns to the tabernacle itself.

3 tn This is for the adverbial accusative explaining how the dwelling place is to be made.

4 sn S. R. Driver suggests that the curtains were made with threads dyed with these colors (*Exodus*, 280). Perhaps the colored threads were used for embroidering the cherubim in the curtains.

5 tn The construction is difficult in this line because of the word order. “Cherubim” is an adverbial accusative explaining how they were to make the curtains. And מַעֲשֵׂה הַיָּסֵב (*ma’aseh khoshev*) means literally “work of a designer”; it is in apposition to “cherubim.” The Hebrew participle means “designer” or “deviser” so that one could render this “of artistic designs in weaving” (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 280-81). B. Jacob says that it refers to “artistic weavers” (*Exodus*, 789).

6 tn Heb “one” (so KJV).

7 tn Heb “twenty-eight cubits” long and “four cubits” wide.

8 tn This is the active participle, not the passive. It would normally be rendered “joining together.” The Bible uses the active because it has the result of the sewing in mind, namely, that every curtain accompanies another (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 348).

9 tn Heb “a woman to her sister,” this form of using nouns to express “one to another” is selected because “curtains” is a feminine noun (see GKC 448 §139.e).

10 tn The phrase “the other” has been supplied.

11 tn Here “loops” has been supplied.

12 tn Heb “a woman to her sister.”

13 tn Heb “one”; KJV “it shall be one tabernacle”; NRSV “that the tabernacle may be one whole”; NLT “a single unit.”

14 sn This chapter will show that there were two sets of

curtains and two sets of coverings that went over the wood building to make the tabernacle or dwelling place. The curtains of fine linen described above could be seen only by the priests from inside. Above that was the curtain of goats’ hair. Then over that were the coverings, an inner covering of rams’ skins dyed red and an outer covering of hides of fine leather. The movement is from the inside to the outside because it is God’s dwelling place; the approach of the worshiper would be the opposite. The pure linen represented the righteousness of God, guarded by the embroidered cherubim; the curtain of goats’ hair was a reminder of sin through the daily sin offering of a goat; the covering of rams’ skins dyed red was a reminder of the sacrifice and the priestly ministry set apart by blood, and the outer covering marked the separation between God and the world. These are the interpretations set forth by Kaiser; others vary, but not greatly (see W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:459).

15 sn This curtain will serve “for a tent over the tabernacle,” as a dwelling place.

16 tn Heb “you will make them”

17 tn Heb “one”

18 sn The text seems to describe this part as being in front of the tabernacle, hanging down to form a valence at the entrance (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 284).

19 tn Heb “one”

20 sn U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 353) cites *b. Shabbat* 98b which says, “What did the tabernacle resemble? A woman walking on the street with her train trailing behind her.” In the expression “the half of the curtain that remains,” the verb agrees in gender with the genitive near it.

21 tn Literally “cubit.”

22 sn U. Cassuto states the following: “To the north and to the south, since the tent curtains were thirty cubits long, there were ten cubits left over on each side; these covered the nine cubits of the curtains of the tabernacle and also the bottom cubit of the boards, which the tabernacle curtains did not suffice to cover. It is to this that v. 13 refers” (*Exodus*, 353).

23 sn Two outer coverings made of stronger materials will be put over the tent and the curtain, the two inner layers.

24 tn See the note on this phrase in Exod 25:5.

26:15 “You are to make the frames¹ for the tabernacle out of² acacia wood as uprights.³ **26:16** Each⁴ frame is to be fifteen feet long, and each frame is to be two feet three inches wide, **26:17** with two projections⁵ per frame parallel one to another.⁶ You are to make all the frames of the tabernacle in this way. **26:18** So you are to make the frames for the tabernacle: twenty frames for the south side,⁷ **26:19** and you are to make forty silver bases to go under the twenty frames – two bases under the first frame for its two projections, and likewise⁸ two bases under the next frame for its two projections; **26:20** and for the second side of the tabernacle, the north side, twenty frames, **26:21** and their forty silver bases, two bases under the first frame, and two bases under the next frame. **26:22** And for the back of the tabernacle on the west⁹ you will make six frames. **26:23** You are to make two frames for the corners¹⁰ of the tabernacle on the back. **26:24** At the two corners¹¹ they must be doubled at the lower end and finished together at the top in one ring. So it will be for both. **26:25** So there are to be eight frames and their silver bases, sixteen bases, two bases under the first frame, and two bases under the next frame.

26:26 “You are to make bars of acacia wood, five for the frames on one side of the tabernacle, **26:27** and five bars for the frames on the second side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the frames on the back of the tabernacle on the west. **26:28** The middle bar in the center of the frames will reach from end to end.¹² **26:29** You are to overlay the frames with gold and make their rings of gold

to provide places for the bars, and you are to overlay the bars with gold. **26:30** You are to set up the tabernacle according to the plan¹³ that you were shown on the mountain.

26:31 “You are to make a special curtain¹⁴ of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine twisted linen; it is to be made¹⁵ with cherubim, the work of an artistic designer. **26:32** You are to hang it¹⁶ with gold hooks¹⁷ on four posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold, set in¹⁸ four silver bases. **26:33** You are to hang this curtain under the clasps and bring the ark of the testimony in there behind the curtain.¹⁹ The curtain will make a division for you between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.²⁰ **26:34** You are to put the atonement lid on the ark of the testimony in the Most Holy Place. **26:35** You are to put the table outside the curtain and the lampstand on the south side of the tabernacle, opposite the table, and you are to place the table on the north side.

26:36 “You are to make a hanging²¹ for the entrance of the tent of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine twined linen, the work of an embroiderer.²² **26:37** You are to make for the hanging five posts of acacia wood and overlay them with gold, and their hooks will be²³ gold, and you are to cast five bronze bases for them.²⁴

¹ **tn** There is debate whether the word הַקָּרָנִים (*haqq^rrashim*) means “boards” (KJV, ASV, NAB, NASB) or “frames” (NIV, NCV, NRSV, TEV) or “planks” (see Ezek 27:6) or “beams,” given the size of them. The literature on this includes M. Haran, “The Priestly Image of the Tabernacle,” *HUCA* 36 (1965): 192; B. A. Levine, “The Description of the Tabernacle Texts of the Pentateuch,” *JAOS* 85 (1965): 307-18; J. Morgenstern, “The Ark, the Ephod, and the Tent,” *HUCA* 17 (1942/43): 153-265; 18 (1943/44): 1-52.

² **tn** “Wood” is an adverbial accusative.

³ **tn** The plural participle “standing” refers to how these items will be situated; they will be vertical rather than horizontal (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 354).

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “the frame.”

⁵ **sn** *Heb* “hands,” the reference is probably to projections that served as stays or supports. They may have been tenons, or pegs, projecting from the bottom of the frames to hold the frames in their sockets (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 286).

⁶ **tn** Or “being joined each to the other.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “on the south side southward.”

⁸ **tn** The clause is repeated to show the distributive sense; it literally says, “and two bases under the one frame for its two projections.”

⁹ **tn** Or “westward” (toward the sea).

¹⁰ **sn** The term rendered “corners” is “an architectural term for some kind of special corner structure. Here it seems to involve two extra supports, one at each corner of the western wall” (N. M. Sarna, *Exodus* [JPSTC], 170).

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “they will be for the two corners.” This is the last clause of the verse, moved forward for clarity.

¹² **sn** These bars served as reinforcements to hold the upright frames together. The Hebrew term for these bars is also used of crossbars on gates (Judg 16:3; Neh 3:3).

¹³ **tn** The noun is מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*), often translated “judgment” or “decision” in other contexts. In those settings it may reflect its basic idea of custom, which here would be reflected with a rendering of “prescribed norm” or “plan.”

¹⁴ **tn** Although translated “curtain” (traditionally “veil,” so ASV, NAB, NASB) this is a different word from the one used earlier of the tent curtains, so “special curtain” is used. The word פָּרֹכֶת (*farokhet*) seems to be connected with a verb that means “to shut off” and was used with a shrine. This curtain would form a barrier in the approach to God (see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 289).

¹⁵ **tn** The verb is the third masculine singular form, but no subject is expressed. It could be translated “one will make” or as a passive. The verb means “to make,” but probably has the sense of embroidering both here and in v. 1.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “put it.”

¹⁷ **tn** This clause simply says “and their hooks gold,” but is taken as a circumstantial clause telling how the veil will be hung.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “on four silver bases.”

¹⁹ **tn** The traditional expression is “within the veil,” literally “into the house (or area) of the (special) curtain.”

²⁰ **tn** Or “the Holy of Holies.”

²¹ **sn** This was another curtain, serving as a screen in the entrance way. Since it was far away from the special curtain screening the Most Holy Place, it was less elaborate. It was not the work of the master designer, but of the “embroiderer,” and it did not have the cherubim on it.

²² **tn** The word רוֹקֵם (*roqem*) refers to someone who made cloth with colors. It is not certain, however, whether the colors were woven into the fabric on the loom or applied with a needle; so “embroiderer” should be understood as an approximation (cf. *HALOT* 1290-91 s.v. רוֹקֵם).

²³ **tn** “will be” has been supplied.

²⁴ **sn** In all the details of this chapter the expositor should pay attention to the overall message rather than engage in speculation concerning the symbolism of the details. It is, after all, the divine instruction for the preparation of the dwelling place for Yahweh. The point could be said this way: The dwelling place of Yahweh must be prepared in accordance with, and by the power of, his divine word. If God was to fellowship with his people, then the center of worship had to be made to his specifications, which were in harmony with his

The Altar

27:1 “You are to make the¹ altar of acacia wood, seven feet six inches long,² and seven feet six inches wide; the altar is to be square,³ and its height is to be⁴ four feet six inches. 27:2 You are to make its four horns⁵ on its four corners; its horns will be part of it,⁶ and you are to overlay it with bronze. 27:3 You are to make its pots for the ashes,⁷ its shovels, its tossing bowls,⁸ its

nature. Everything was functional for the approach to God through the ritual by divine provisions. But everything also reflected the nature of God, the symmetry, the order, the pure wood, the gold overlay, or (closer to God) the solid gold. And the symbolism of the light, the table, the veil, the cherubim – all of it was revelatory. All of it reflected the reality in heaven. Churches today do not retain the pattern and furnishings of the old tabernacle. However, they would do well to learn what God was requiring of Israel, so that their structures are planned in accordance with the theology of worship and the theology of access to God. Function is a big part, but symbolism and revelation instruct the planning of everything to be used. Christians live in the light of the fulfillment of Christ, and so they know the realities that the old foreshadowed. While a building is not necessary for worship (just as Israel worshiped in places other than the sanctuary), it is practical, and if there is going to be one, then the most should be made of it in the teaching and worshiping of the assembly. This chapter, then, provides an inspiration for believers on preparing a functional, symbolical, ordered place of worship that is in harmony with the word of God. And there is much to be said for making it as beautiful and uplifting as is possible – as a gift of free-will offering to God. Of course, the most important part of preparing a place of worship is the preparing of the heart. Worship, to be acceptable to God, must be in Christ. He said that when the temple was destroyed he would raise it up in three days. While he referred to his own body, he also alluded to the temple by the figure. When they put Jesus to death, they were destroying the temple; at his resurrection he would indeed begin a new form of worship. He is the tent, the curtain, the atonement, that the sanctuary foreshadowed. And then, believers also (when they receive Christ) become the temple of the Lord. So the NT will take the imagery and teaching of this chapter in a number of useful ways that call for more study. This does not, however, involve allegorization of the individual tabernacle parts.

1 tn The article on this word identifies this as *the* altar, meaning the main high altar on which the sacrifices would be made.

2 tn The dimensions are five cubits by five cubits by three cubits high.

3 tn Heb “four”; this refers to four sides. S. R. Driver says this is an archaism that means there were four equal sides (*Exodus*, 291).

4 tn Heb “and three cubits its height.”

5 sn The horns of the altar were indispensable – they were the most sacred part. Blood was put on them; fugitives could cling to them, and the priests would grab the horns of the little altar when making intercessory prayer. They signified power, as horns on an animal did in the wild (and so the word was used for kings as well). The horns may also represent the sacrificial animals killed on the altar.

6 sn The text, as before, uses the prepositional phrase “from it” or “part of it” to say that the horns will be part of the altar – of the same piece as the altar. They were not to be made separately and then attached, but made at the end of the boards used to build the altar (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 363).

7 sn The word is literally “its fat,” but sometimes it describes “fatty ashes” (TEV “the greasy ashes”). The fat would run down and mix with the ashes, and this had to be collected and removed.

8 sn This was the larger bowl used in tossing the blood at the side of the altar.

meat hooks, and its fire pans – you are to make all⁹ its utensils of bronze. 27:4 You are to make a grating¹⁰ for it, a network of bronze, and you are to make on the network four bronze rings on its four corners. 27:5 You are to put it under the ledge of the altar below, so that the network will come¹¹ halfway up the altar.¹² 27:6 You are to make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and you are to overlay them with bronze. 27:7 The poles are to be put¹³ into the rings so that the poles will be on two sides of the altar when carrying it.¹⁴ 27:8 You are to make the altar hollow, out of boards. Just as it was shown you¹⁵ on the mountain, so they must make it.¹⁶

The Courtyard

27:9 “You are to make the courtyard¹⁷ of the tabernacle. For the south side¹⁸ there are to be hangings¹⁹ for the courtyard of fine twisted

9 tn The text has “to all its vessels.” This is the *lamed* (ל) of inclusion according to Gesenius, meaning “all its utensils” (GKC 458 §143.e).

10 tn The noun מִכְבָּר (*mikhbar*) means “a grating”; it is related to the word that means a “sieve.” This formed a vertical support for the ledge, resting on the ground and supporting its outer edge (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 292).

11 tn The verb is the verb “to be,” here the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive. It is “and it will be” or “that it may be,” or here “that it may come” halfway up.

12 tn Heb “to the half of the altar.”

13 tn The verb is a Hophal perfect with *vav* consecutive: וְהוּבָא (ו^h*huva*’, “and it will be brought”). The particle וְ (‘*et*’) here introduces the subject of the passive verb (see a similar use in 21:28, “and its flesh will not be eaten”).

14 tn The construction is the infinitive construct with *bet* (ב) preposition: “in carrying it.” Here the meaning must be that the poles are not left in the rings, but only put into the rings when they carried it.

15 tn The verb is used impersonally; it reads “just as he showed you.” This form then can be made a passive in the translation.

16 tn Heb “thus they will make.” Here too it could be given a passive translation since the subject is not expressed. But “they” would normally refer to the people who will be making this and so can be retained in the translation.

sn Nothing is said about the top of the altar. Some commentators suggest, in view of the previous instruction for making an altar out of earth and stone, that when this one was to be used it would be filled up with dirt clods and the animal burnt on the top of that. If the animal was burnt inside it, the wood would quickly burn. A number of recent scholars think this was simply an imagined plan to make a portable altar after the pattern of Solomon’s – but that is an unsatisfactory suggestion. This construction must simply represent a portable frame for the altar in the courtyard, an improvement over the field altar. The purpose and function of the altar are not in question. Here worshipers would make their sacrifices to God in order to find forgiveness and atonement, and in order to celebrate in worship with him. No one could worship God apart from this; no one could approach God apart from this. So too the truths that this altar communicated form the basis and center of all Christian worship. One could word an applicable lesson this way: Believers must ensure that the foundation and center of their worship is the altar, i.e., the sacrificial atonement.

17 tn Or “enclosure” (TEV).

18 tn Heb “south side southward.”

19 tn Or “curtains.”

linen, one hundred fifty feet long for one side,¹ 27:10 with² twenty posts and their twenty bronze bases, with the hooks of the posts and their bands of silver. 27:11 Likewise³ for its length on the north side, there are to be⁴ hangings for one hundred fifty feet, with twenty posts and their twenty bronze bases, with silver hooks and bands⁵ on the posts. 27:12 The width of the court on the west side is to be seventy-five feet with hangings, with their ten posts and their ten bases. 27:13 The width of the court on the east side, toward the sunrise, is to be seventy-five feet. 27:14 The hangings on one side⁶ of the gate are to be⁷ twenty-two and a half feet long, with their three posts and their three bases. 27:15 On the second side⁸ there are to be⁹ hangings twenty-two and a half feet long, with their three posts and their three bases. 27:16 For the gate of the courtyard there is to be a curtain of thirty feet, of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine twined linen, the work of an embroiderer, with four posts and their four bases. 27:17 All the posts around the courtyard are to have silver bands,¹⁰ their hooks are to be¹¹ silver, and their bases bronze. 27:18 The length of the courtyard is to be one hundred fifty feet¹² and the width seventy-five feet,¹³ and the height of the fine twisted linen hangings¹⁴ is to be¹⁵ seven and a half feet, with their bronze bases. 27:19 All¹⁶ the utensils of the tabernacle used¹⁷ in all its service, all its tent pegs, and all the tent pegs of the courtyard are to be made of bronze.¹⁸

¹ sn The entire courtyard of 150 feet by 75 feet was to be enclosed by a curtain wall held up with posts in bases. All these hangings were kept in place by a cord and tent pegs.

² tn Heb "and."

³ tn Heb "and thus."

⁴ tn Here the phrase "there will be" has been supplied.

⁵ sn These bands have been thought by some to refer to connecting rods joining the tops of the posts. But it is more likely that they are bands or bind rings surrounding the posts at the base of the capitals (see 38:17).

⁶ tn The word literally means "shoulder." The next words, "of the gate," have been supplied here and in v. 15. The east end would contain the courtyard's entry with a wall of curtains on each side of the entry (see v. 16).

⁷ tn Here "will be" has been supplied.

⁸ tn Heb "shoulder."

⁹ tn Here the phrase "is to be" has been supplied.

¹⁰ tn The text uses the passive participle here: they are to "be filleted with silver" or "bound round" with silver.

¹¹ tn Here the phrase "are to be" has been supplied.

¹² tn Heb "a hundred cubits."

¹³ tn Heb "fifty." The text has "and the width fifty [cubits] with fifty." This means that it is fifty cubits wide on the western end and fifty cubits wide on the eastern end.

¹⁴ tn Here "hangings" has been supplied.

¹⁵ tn Here the phrase "is to be" has been supplied.

¹⁶ tn Heb "to all"; for use of the preposition *lamed* (ל) to show inclusion (all belonging to) see GKC 458 §143.e.

¹⁷ tn Here "used" has been supplied.

¹⁸ sn The tabernacle is an important aspect of OT theology. The writer's pattern so far has been: ark, table, lamp, and then their container (the tabernacle); then the altar and its container (the courtyard). The courtyard is the place of worship where the people could gather – they entered God's courts. Though the courtyard may not seem of much interest to current readers, it did interest the Israelites. Here the sacrifices were made, the choirs sang, the believers offered their praises, they had their sins forgiven, they came to pray, they

Offering the Oil

27:20 "You are to command the Israelites that they bring¹⁹ to you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, so that the lamps²⁰ will burn²¹ regularly."²² 27:21 In the tent of meeting²³ outside the curtain that is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons are to arrange it from evening²⁴ to morning before the LORD. This is to be a lasting ordinance among the Israelites for generations to come.²⁵

The Clothing of the Priests

28:1²⁶ "And you, bring near²⁷ to you your brother Aaron and his sons with him from among the Israelites, so that they may minister as my priests²⁸ – Aaron, Nadab and Abihu,

appeared on the holy days, and they heard from God. It was sacred because God met them there; they left the "world" (figuratively speaking) and came into the very presence of God.

¹⁹ tn The form is the imperfect tense with the vav showing a sequence with the first verb: "you will command...that they take." The verb "take, receive" is used here as before for receiving an offering and bringing it to the sanctuary.

²⁰ tn Heb "lamp," which must be a collective singular here.

²¹ tn The verb is unusual; it is the Hiphil infinitive construct of *alah* ('alah), with the sense here of "to set up" to burn, or "to fix on" as in Exod 25:37, or "to kindle" (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 370).

²² sn The word can mean "continually," but in this context, as well as in the passages on the sacrifices, "regularly" is better, since each morning things were cleaned and restored.

²³ tn The LXX has mistakenly rendered this name "the tent of the testimony."

²⁴ sn The lamps were to be removed in the morning so that the wicks could be trimmed and the oil replenished (30:7) and then lit every evening to burn through the night.

²⁵ sn This is the first of several sections of priestly duties. The point is a simple one here: those who lead the worship use the offerings of the people to ensure that access to God is illumined regularly. The NT will make much of the symbolism of light.

²⁶ sn Some modern scholars find this and the next chapter too elaborate for the wilderness experience. To most of them this reflects the later Zadokite priesthood of the writer's (P's) day that was referred to Mosaic legislation for authentication. But there is no compelling reason why this should be late; it is put late because it is assumed to be P, and that is assumed to be late. But both assumptions are unwarranted. This lengthy chapter could be divided this way: instructions for preparing the garments (1-5), details of the apparel (6-39), and a warning against deviating from these (40-43). The subject matter of the first part is that God requires that his chosen ministers reflect his holy nature; the point of the second part is that God requires his ministers to be prepared to fulfill the tasks of the ministry, and the subject matter of the third part is that God warns all his ministers to safeguard the holiness of their service.

²⁷ tn The verb is the Hiphil imperative of the root *qarav*, "to draw near"). In the present stem the word has religious significance, namely, to present something to God, like an offering.

²⁸ tn This entire clause is a translation of the Hebrew *li-kohenu* (לִּי כֹהֲנֵי, "that he might be a priest to me"), but the form is unusual. The word means "to be a priest" or "to act as a priest." The etymology of the word for priest, *kohen*, is uncertain.

Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons. **28:2** You must make holy garments¹ for your brother Aaron, for glory and for beauty.² **28:3** You³ are to speak to all who are specially skilled,⁴ whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom,⁵ so that they may make⁶ Aaron's garments to set him apart⁷ to minister as my priest. **28:4** Now these are the garments that they are to make: a breast-piece,⁸ an ephod,⁹ a robe, a fitted¹⁰ tunic, a tur-

ban, and a sash. They are to make holy garments for your brother Aaron and for his sons, that they may minister as my priests. **28:5** The artisans¹¹ are to use¹² the gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen.

28:6 "They are to make the ephod of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twisted linen, the work of an artistic designer. **28:7** It is to have two shoulder pieces attached to two of its corners, so it can be joined together.¹³ **28:8** The artistically woven waistband¹⁴ of the ephod that is on it is to be like it, of one piece with the ephod,¹⁵ of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twisted linen.

28:9 "You are to take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel,¹⁶ **28:10** six¹⁷ of their names on one stone, and the six remaining names on the second stone, according to the order of their birth.¹⁸ **28:11** You are to engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel with the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a seal;¹⁹ you are to have them set²⁰ in gold filigree²¹ settings. **28:12** You are to put the two stones on the shoulders of the ephod, stones of memorial for the sons of Israel, and Aaron will bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for

1 sn The genitive "holiness" is the attribute for "garments" – "garments of holiness." The point of the word "holy" is that these garments would be distinctive from ordinary garments, for they set Aaron apart to sanctuary service and ministry.

2 tn The expression לְכָבוֹד וְלִתְפִאֲרֶת (*l'khavod ul'tifaret*, "for glory and for beauty"). W. C. Kaiser ("Exodus," *EBC* 2:465), quoting the NIV's "to give him dignity and honor," says that these clothes were to exalt the office of the high priest as well as beautify the worship of God (which explains more of what the text has than the NIV rendering). The meaning of the word "glory" has much to do with the importance of the office, to be sure, but in Exodus the word has been used also for the brilliance of the presence of Yahweh, and so the magnificence of these garments might indeed strike the worshiper with the sense of the exaltation of the service.

3 tn *Heb* "And you, you will speak to."

4 tn *Heb* "wise of heart." The word for "wise" (חָכָמִי, *khakhme*, the plural construct form) is from the word group that is usually translated "wisdom, wise, be wise," but it has as its basic meaning "skill" or "skillful." This is the way it is used in 31:3, 6 and 35:10 etc. God gave these people "wisdom" so that they would know how to make these things. The "heart" for the Hebrews is the locus of understanding, the mind and the will. To be "wise of heart" or "wise in heart" means that they had the understanding to do skillful work, they were talented artisans and artists.

5 sn There is no necessity to take this as a reference to the Holy Spirit who produces wisdom in these people, although that is not totally impossible. A number of English versions (e.g., NAB, NIV, NCV, NRSV, TEV, CEV, NLT) do not even translate the word "spirit." It probably refers to their attitude and ability. U. Cassuto has "to all the artisans skilled in the making of stately robes, in the heart [i.e., mind] of each of whom I have implanted sagacity in his craft so that he may do his craft successfully" (*Exodus*, 37:1).

6 tn The form is the perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) consecutive; after the instruction to speak to the wise, this verb, equal to an imperfect, will have the force of purpose.

7 tn Or "to sanctify him" (ASV) or "to consecrate him" (KJV, NASB, NRSV). It is the garments that will set Aaron apart, or sanctify him, not the workers. The expression could be taken to mean "for his consecration" (NIV) since the investiture is part of his being set apart for service.

8 sn The breastpiece seems to have been a pouch of sorts or to have had a pocket, since it was folded in some way (28:16; 39:9) and contained the Urim and Thummim (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8).

9 sn The word "ephod" is taken over directly from Hebrew, because no one knows how to translate it, nor is there agreement about its design. It refers here to a garment worn by the priests, but the word can also refer to some kind of image for a god (Judg 8:27).

10 tn The word תְּשֻׁבֵּת (*tashbets*), which describes the tunic and which appears only in this verse, is related to a verb (also rare) of the same root in 28:39 that describes making the tunic. Their meaning is uncertain (see the extended discussion in C. Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:473-75). A related noun describes gold fasteners and the "settings," or "mountings," for precious stones (28:11, 13, 14, 20, 25; 36:18; 39:6, 13, 16, 18; cf. Ps 45:14). The word "fitted" in 28:4 reflects the possibility that "the tunic is to be shaped by sewing, ... so that it will fit tightly around the body" (C. Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:475).

11 tn *Heb* "and they." The word "artisans" is supplied as the referent of the pronoun, a connection that is clearer in Hebrew than in English.

12 tn *Heb* "receive" or "take."

13 tn Here the Pual perfect with the *vav* (ו) consecutive provides the purpose clause (equal to a final imperfect); the form follows the use of the active participle, "attached" or more *Heb* "joining."

14 tn This is the rendering of the word חֶשֶׁב (*kheshhev*), cognate to the word translated "designer" in v. 6. Since the entire ephod was of the same material, and this was of the same piece, it is unclear why this is singled out as "artistically woven." Perhaps the word is from another root that just describes the item as a "band." Whatever the connection, this band was to be of the same material, and the same piece, as the ephod, but perhaps a different pattern (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 30:1). It is this sash that attaches the ephod to the priest's body, that is, at the upper border of the ephod and clasped together at the back.

15 tn *Heb* "from it" but meaning "of one [the same] piece"; the phrase "the ephod" has been supplied.

16 tn Although this is normally translated "Israelites," here a more literal translation is clearer because it refers to the names of the twelve tribes – the actual sons of Israel.

17 tn This is in apposition to the direct object of the verb "engrave." It further defines how the names were to be engraved – six on one and the other six on the other.

18 tn *Heb* "according to their begettings" (the major word in the book of Genesis). What is meant is that the names would be listed in the order of their ages.

19 sn Expert stone or gem engravers were used to engrave designs and names in identification seals of various sizes. It was work that skilled artisans did.

20 tn Or "you will mount them" (NRSV similar).

21 tn Or "rosettes," shield-like frames for the stones. The Hebrew word means "to plait, checker."

a memorial.¹ **28:13** You are to make filigree settings of gold **28:14** and two braided chains of pure gold, like a cord, and attach the chains to the settings.

28:15 “You are to make a breastpiece for use in making decisions,² the work of an artistic designer; you are to make it in the same fashion as the ephod; you are to make it of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twisted linen. **28:16** It is to be square³ when⁴ doubled, nine inches⁵ long and nine inches wide. **28:17** You are to set in it a setting for stones, four rows of stones, a row with a ruby, a topaz, and a beryl – the first row; **28:18** and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald; **28:19** and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; **28:20** and the fourth row, a chrysolite, an onyx, and a jasper.⁶ They are to be enclosed in gold in their filigree settings. **28:21** The stones are to be for the names of the sons of Israel, twelve, according to the number of⁷ their names. Each name according to the twelve tribes is to be like⁸ the engravings of a seal.

28:22 “You are to make for the breastpiece braided chains like cords of pure gold, **28:23** and you are to make for the breastpiece two gold rings and attach⁹ the two rings to the upper¹⁰ two ends of the breastpiece. **28:24** You are to attach the two gold chains to the two rings at the ends of the breastpiece; **28:25** the other¹¹ two ends of the two chains you will attach to the two settings and then attach them¹² to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front of it. **28:26** You are to make two rings of gold and put them on the other¹³ two ends of the breastpiece, on its edge

that is on the inner side of the ephod. **28:27** You are to make two more¹⁴ gold rings and attach them to the bottom of the two shoulder pieces on the front of the ephod, close to the juncture above the waistband of the ephod. **28:28** They are to tie the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod by blue cord, so that it may be above the waistband of the ephod, and so that the breastpiece will not be loose from the ephod. **28:29** Aaron will bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of decision over his heart¹⁵ when he goes into the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually.

28:30 “You are to put the Urim and the Thummim¹⁶ into the breastpiece of decision; and they are to be over Aaron’s heart when he goes in before the LORD. Aaron is to bear the decisions¹⁷ of the Israelites over his heart before the LORD continually.

28:31 “You are to make the robe¹⁸ of the ephod completely blue. **28:32** There is to be an opening¹⁹ in its top²⁰ in the center of it, with an edge all around the opening, the work of a

¹⁴ tn Here “more” has been supplied.

¹⁵ sn So Aaron will have the names of the tribes on his shoulders (v. 12) which bear the weight and symbol of office (see Isa 9:6; 22:22), and over his heart (implying that they have a constant place in his thoughts [Deut 6:6]). Thus he was to enter the presence of God as the nation’s representative, ever mindful of the nation’s interests, and ever bringing the remembrance of it before God (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 306).

¹⁶ sn *The Urim and the Thummim* were two objects intended for determining the divine will. There is no clear evidence of their size or shape or the material of which they were made, but they seem to have been familiar items to Moses and the people. The best example of their use comes from 1 Sam 14:36-42. Some have suggested from the etymologies that they were light and dark objects respectively, perhaps stones or sticks or some other object. They seem to have fallen out of use after the Davidic period when the prophetic oracles became popular. It may be that the title “breastpiece of judgment” indicates that these objects were used for making “decisions” (J. P. Hyatt, *Exodus* [NCBC], 283-84). U. Cassuto has the most thorough treatment of the subject (*Exodus*, 378-82); he lists several very clear rules for their uses gathered from their instances in the Bible, including that they were a form of sacred lot, that priests or leaders of the people only could use them, and that they were used for discovering the divine will in areas that were beyond human knowledge.

¹⁷ tn Or “judgment” (KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV). The term is מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*), the same word that describes the breastpiece that held the two objects. Here it is translated “decisions” since the Urim and Thummim contained in the breastpiece represented the means by which the LORD made decisions for the Israelites. The high priest bore the responsibility of discerning the divine will on matters of national importance.

¹⁸ tn The מַעֲטֵי (*m^e’it*), according to S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 307), is a long robe worn over the ephod, perhaps open down the front, with sleeves. It is made of finer material than ordinary cloaks because it was to be worn by people in positions of rank.

¹⁹ tn Heb “mouth” or “opening” (פֶּה, *pi*; in construct).

²⁰ tn The “mouth of its head” probably means its neck; it may be rendered “the opening for the head,” except the pronominal suffix would have to refer to Aaron, and that is not immediately within the context.

¹ sn This was to be a perpetual reminder that the priest ministers on behalf of the twelve tribes of Israel. Their names would always be borne by the priests.

² tn Heb “a breastpiece of decision” (חֹשֶׁן מִשְׁפָּט, *khoshen mishpat*; so NAB). The first word, rendered “breastpiece,” is of uncertain etymology. This item was made of material similar to the ephod. It had four rows of three gems on it, bearing the names of the tribes. In it were the urim and thummim. J. P. Hyatt refers to a similar object found in the Egyptian reliefs, including even the twisted gold chains used to hang it from the priest (*Exodus* [NCBC], 282).

³ tn Heb “four.”

⁴ tn “when” is added for clarification (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 375).

⁵ tn The word זֶרֶת (*zeret*) is half a cubit; it is often translated “span.”

⁶ sn U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 375-76) points out that these are the same precious stones mentioned in Ezek 28:13 that were to be found in Eden, the garden of God. So the priest, when making atonement, was to wear the precious gems that were there and symbolized the garden of Eden when man was freed from sin.

⁷ tn For clarity the words “the number of” have been supplied.

⁸ tn The phrase translated “the engravings of a seal” is an adverbial accusative of manner here.

⁹ tn Heb “give, put.”

¹⁰ tn Here “upper” has been supplied.

¹¹ tn Here “the other” has been supplied.

¹² tn Here “them” has been supplied.

¹³ tn Here “other” has been supplied.

weaver,¹ like the opening of a collar,² so that it cannot be torn.³ **28:33** You are to make pomegranates⁴ of blue, purple, and scarlet all around its hem⁵ and bells of gold between them all around. **28:34** The pattern is to be⁶ a gold bell and a pomegranate, a gold bell and a pomegranate, all around the hem of the robe. **28:35** The robe⁷ is to be on Aaron as he ministers,⁸ and his sound will be heard⁹ when he enters the Holy Place before the LORD and when he leaves, so that he does not die.

28:36 “You are to make a plate¹⁰ of pure gold and engrave on it the way a seal is engraved:¹¹

1 tn Or “woven work” (KJV, ASV, NASB), that is, “the work of a weaver.” The expression suggests that the weaving was from the fabric edges itself and not something woven and then added to the robe. It was obviously intended to keep the opening from fraying.

2 tn The expression כִּפְי־תַהֲרָא (*kēfi takhra*) is difficult. It was early rendered “like the opening of a coat of mail.” It occurs only here and in the parallel 39:23. *Tg. Onq.* has “coat of mail.” S. R. Driver suggests “a linen corselet,” after the Greek (*Exodus*, 308). See J. Cohen, “A Samaritan Authentication of the Rabbinic Interpretation of *kephi takhra*,” *VT* 24 (1974): 361-66.

3 tn The verb is the Niphal imperfect, here given the nuance of potential imperfect. Here it serves in a final clause (purpose/result), introduced only by the negative (see GKC 503-4 §165.a).

4 sn This must mean round balls of yarn that looked like pomegranates. The fruit was very common in the land, but there is no indication of the reason for its choice here. Pomegranates are found in decorative schemes in Ugarit, probably as signs of fertility. It may be that here they represent the blessing of God on Israel in the land. The bells that are between them possibly have the intent of drawing God’s attention as the priest moves and the bells jingle (anthropomorphic, to be sure), or that the people would know that the priest was still alive and moving inside. Some have suggested that the pomegranate may have recalled the forbidden fruit eaten in the garden (the gems already have referred to the garden), the reason for the priest entering for atonement, and the bells would divert the eye (of God) to remind him of the need. This is possible but far from supportable, since nothing is said of the reason, nor is the fruit in the garden identified.

5 tn The text repeats the idea: “you will make for its hem... all around its hem.”

6 tn The words “the pattern is to be” are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for clarity and for stylistic reasons.

7 tn *Heb* “it”; the referent (the robe) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

8 tn The form is a Piel infinitive construct with the *lamed* (ל) preposition: “to minister” or “to serve.” It may be taken epexegetically here, “while serving,” although S. R. Driver takes it as a purpose, “in order that he may minister” (*Exodus*, 308). The point then would be that he dare not enter into the Holy Place without wearing it.

9 sn God would hear the bells and be reminded that this priest was in his presence representing the nation and that the priest had followed the rules of the sanctuary by wearing the appropriate robes with their attachments.

10 tn The word פָּנֶה (*tsis*) seems to mean “a shining thing” and so here a plate of metal. It originally meant “flower,” but they could not write on a flower. So it must have the sense of something worn openly, visible, and shining. The Rabbinic tradition says it was two fingers wide and stretched from ear to ear, but this is an attempt to give details that the Law does not give (see B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 818).

11 tn *Heb* “the engravings of a seal”; this phrase is an adverbial accusative of manner.

“Holiness to the LORD.”¹² **28:37** You are to attach to it a blue cord so that it will be¹³ on the turban; it is to be¹⁴ on the front of the turban. **28:38** It will be on Aaron’s forehead, and Aaron will bear the iniquity of the holy things,¹⁵ which the Israelites are to sanctify by all their holy gifts,¹⁶ it will always be on his forehead, for their acceptance¹⁷ before the LORD. **28:39** You are to weave¹⁸ the tunic of fine linen and make the turban of fine linen, and make the sash the work of an embroiderer.

28:40 “For Aaron’s sons you are to make tunics, sashes, and headbands¹⁹ for glory and for beauty.

28:41 “You are to clothe them – your brother Aaron and his sons with him – and anoint them²⁰

12 sn The engraving was a perpetual reminder of the holiness that was due the LORD (*Heb* “Yahweh”), that all the clothing, the furnishings, and the activities were to come under that description. This corresponded to the symbolism for the whole nation of binding the law between the eyes. It was to be a perpetual reminder of commitment.

13 tn The verb is the perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) consecutive; it follows the same at the beginning of the verse. Since the first verb is equal to the imperfect of instruction, this could be as well, but it is more likely to be subordinated to express the purpose of the former.

14 tn *Heb* “it will be,” an instruction imperfect.

15 tn The construction “the iniquity of the holy things” is difficult. “Holy things” is explained in the passage by all the gifts the people bring and consecrate to Yahweh. But there will inevitably be iniquity involved. U. Cassuto explains that Aaron “will atone for all the transgressions committed in connection with the order of the service, the purity of the consecrated things, or the use of the holy gifts, for the declaration engraved on the plate will prove that everything was intended to be *holy to the Lord*, and if aught was done irregularly, the intention at least was good” (*Exodus*, 385).

16 tn The clause reads: “according to/by all the gifts of their holiness.” The genitive is an attributive genitive, the suffix on it referring to the whole bound construction – “their holy gifts.” The idea of the line is that the people will consecrate as holy things gifts they bring to the sanctuary.

17 tn This clause is the infinitive construct with the *lamed* preposition, followed by the prepositional phrase: “for acceptance for them.” This infinitive provides the purpose or result of the act of wearing the dedicatory frontlet – that they will be acceptable.

18 tn It is difficult to know how to translate שִׁבְבַּטָּא (*v^sshibbasta*); it is a Piel perfect with the *vav* (ו) consecutive, and so equal to the imperfect of instruction. Some have thought that this verb describes a type of weaving and that the root may indicate that the cloth had something of a pattern to it by means of alternate weaving of the threads. It was the work of a weaver (39:27) and not so detailed as certain other fabrics (26:1), but it was more than plain weaving (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 310). Here, however, it may be that the fabric is assumed to be in existence and that the action has to do with sewing (C. Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:475, 517).

19 sn This refers to a band of linen wrapped around the head, forming something like a brimless convex cap, resembling something like a half egg. It refers to the headgear of ordinary priests only (see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 310-11).

20 sn The instructions in this verse anticipate chap. 29, as well as the ordination ceremony described in Lev 8 and 9. The anointing of Aaron is specifically required in the Law, for he is to be the High Priest. The expression “ordain them” might also be translated as “install them” or “consecrate them”; it literally reads “and fill their hands,” an expression for the consecration offering for priesthood in Lev 8:33. The final instruction to sanctify them will involve the ritual of the atoning sacrifices to make the priests acceptable in the sanctuary.

and ordain them¹ and set them apart as holy,² so that they may minister as my priests. **28:42** Make for them linen undergarments to cover their naked bodies;³ they must cover⁴ from the waist to the thighs. **28:43** These must be on Aaron and his sons when they enter⁵ to the tent of meeting, or when they approach⁶ the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they bear no iniquity and die.⁷ It is to be a perpetual ordinance for him and for his descendants⁸ after him.⁹

The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons

29:1¹⁰ “Now this is what¹¹ you are to do for them to consecrate them so that they may minister as my priests. Take a young¹² bull and two rams without blemish;¹³ **29:2** and¹⁴ bread made without yeast, and perforated cakes without yeast mixed with oil, and wafers without yeast spread¹⁵ with oil – you are to make them using¹⁶ fine wheat flour. **29:3** You are to put them in one basket and present¹⁷ them in the basket, along with¹⁸ the bull and the two rams.

29:4 “You are to present¹⁹ Aaron and his sons at the entrance of the tent of meeting. You are to wash²⁰ them with water **29:5** and take the garments and clothe Aaron with the tunic,²¹ the robe

¹⁰ **sn** Chap. 29 is a rather long, involved discussion of the consecration of Aaron the priest. It is similar to the ordination service in Lev 8. In fact, the execution of what is instructed here is narrated there. But these instructions must have been formulated after or in conjunction with Lev 1-7, for they presuppose a knowledge of the sacrifices. The bulk of the chapter is the consecration of the priests: 1-35. It has the preparation (1-3), washing (4), investiture and anointing (5-9), sin offering (10-14), burnt offering (15-18), installation peace offering (19-26, 31-34), other offerings' rulings (27-30), and the duration of the ritual (35). Then there is the consecration of the altar (36-37), and the oblations (38-46). There are many possibilities for the study and exposition of this material. The whole chapter is the consecration of tabernacle, altar, people, and most of all the priests. God was beginning the holy operations with sacral ritual. So the overall message would be: Everyone who ministers, everyone who worships, and everything they use in the presence of Yahweh, must be set apart to God by the cleansing, enabling, and sanctifying work of God.

¹¹ **tn** Heb “the thing.”

¹² **tn** Literally: “take one bull, a ‘son’ of the herd.”

¹³ **tn** The word תמים (*tamim*) means “perfect.” The animals could not have diseases or be crippled or blind (see Mal 1). The requirement was designed to ensure that the people would give the best they had to Yahweh. The typology pointed to the sinless Messiah who would fulfill all these sacrifices in his one sacrifice on the cross.

¹⁴ **sn** This will be for the *minkkha* (מִנְחָה) offering (Lev 2), which was to accompany the animal sacrifices.

¹⁵ **tn** Or “anointed” (KJV, ASV).

¹⁶ **tn** The “fine flour” is here an adverbial accusative, explaining the material from which these items were made. The flour is to be finely sifted, and from the wheat, not the barley, which was often the material used by the poor. Fine flour, no leaven, and perfect animals, without blemishes, were to be gathered for this service.

¹⁷ **tn** The verb קָרַב (*qarav*) in the Hiphil means to “bring near” to the altar, or, to offer something to God. These gifts will, therefore, be offered to him for the service of this ritual.

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “and with.”

¹⁹ **tn** Here too the verb is Hiphil (now imperfect) meaning “bring near” the altar. The choice of this verb indicates that they were not merely being brought near, but that they were being formally presented to Yahweh as the offerings were.

²⁰ **sn** This is the washing referred to in Lev 8:6. This is a complete washing, not just of the hands and feet that would follow in the course of service. It had to serve as a symbolic ritual cleansing or purifying as the initial stage in the consecration. The imagery of washing will be used in the NT for regeneration (Titus 3:5).

²¹ **tn** The Hiphil of לָבַשׁ (*lavash*, “to clothe”) will take double accusatives; so the sign of the accusative is with Aaron, and then with the articles of clothing. The translation will have to treat Aaron as the direct object and the articles as indirect objects, because Aaron receives the prominence in the verse – you will clothe Aaron.

¹ **tn** Heb “fill their hand.” As a result of this installation ceremony they will be officially designated for the work. It seems likely that the concept derives from the notion of putting the priestly responsibilities under their control (i.e., “filling their hands” with work). See note on the phrase “ordained seven days” in Lev 8:33.

² **tn** Traditionally “sanctify them” (KJV, ASV).

³ **tn** Heb “naked flesh” (so NAB, NRSV); KJV “nakedness.”

⁴ **tn** Heb “be.”

⁵ **tn** The construction for this temporal clause is the infinitive construct with the temporal preposition *bet* (ב) and the suffixed subjective genitive.

⁶ **tn** This construction is also the temporal clause with the infinitive construct and the temporal preposition *bet* (ב) and the suffixed subjective genitive.

⁷ **tn** The text has לֹא יִשְׂאוּ עֲוֹן וְיָמָוּתוּ (lo'-'yis'u 'avon vametu). The imperfect tense here introduces a final clause, yielding a purpose or result translation (“in order that” or “so that”). The last verb is the perfect tense with the *vav* consecutive, and so it too is equal to a final imperfect – but it would show the result of bearing the iniquity. The idea is that if they approached the holy things with a lack of modesty, perhaps like the pagans who have nakedness and sexuality as part of the religious ritual, they would pollute the holy things, and it would be reckoned to them for iniquity and they would die.

⁸ **tn** Heb “seed.”

⁹ **sn** So the priests were to make intercession for the people, give decisions from God’s revealed will, enter his presence in purity, and represent holiness to Yahweh. The clothing of the priests provided for these functions, but in a way that brought honor and dignity. A priest was, therefore, to serve in purity, holiness, and fear (Malachi). There is much that can be derived from this chapter to form principles of spiritual leadership, but the overall point can be worded this way: Those whom God selects to minister to the congregation through intercessory prayer, divine counsel, and sacrificial worship, must always represent the holiness of Yahweh in their activities and demeanor.

of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastpiece; you are to fasten the ephod on him by using the skillfully woven waistband.¹ **29:6** You are to put the turban on his head and put the holy diadem² on the turban. **29:7** You are to take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him.³ **29:8** You are to present his sons and clothe them with tunics **29:9** and wrap the sashes around Aaron and his sons⁴ and put headbands on them, and so the ministry of priesthood will belong to them by a perpetual ordinance. Thus you are to consecrate⁵ Aaron and his sons.

29:10 “You are to present the bull at the front of the tent of meeting, and Aaron and his sons are to put⁶ their hands on the head⁷ of the bull. **29:11** You are to kill the bull before the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting **29:12** and take some of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar⁸ with your finger; all the rest

of⁹ the blood you are to pour out at the base of the altar. **29:13** You are to take all the fat that covers the entrails, and the lobe¹⁰ that is above the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, and burn them¹¹ on the altar. **29:14** But the meat of the bull, its skin, and its dung you are to burn up¹² outside the camp.¹³ It is the purification offering.¹⁴

29:15 “You are to take one ram, and Aaron and his sons are to lay their hands on the ram’s head, **29:16** and you are to kill the ram and take its blood and splash it all around on the altar. **29:17** Then you are to cut the ram into pieces and wash the entrails and its legs and put them on its pieces and on its head **29:18** and burn¹⁵ the whole ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering¹⁶ to the LORD, a soothing aroma; it is an offering made by fire¹⁷ to the LORD.¹⁸

29:19 “You are to take the second ram, and Aaron and his sons are to lay their hands on the ram’s head, **29:20** and you are to kill the ram and take some of its blood and put it on the tip of

1 tn The verb used in this last clause is a denominative verb from the word for ephod. And so “ephod the ephod on him” means “fasten as an ephod the ephod on him” (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 316).

2 sn This term does not appear in chap. 28, but it can only refer to the plate with the inscription on it that was tied to the turban. Here it is called a “holy diadem,” a diadem that is distinctly set apart for this service. All the clothing was described as “holy garments,” and so they were all meant to mark the separation of the priests to this holy service. The items of clothing were each intended for different aspects of ministry, and so this step in the consecration was designed to symbolize being set apart for those duties, or, prepared (gifted) to perform the ministry.

3 sn The act of anointing was meant to set him apart for this holy service within the house of Yahweh. The psalms indicate that no oil was spared in this ritual, for it ran down his beard and to the hem of his garment. Oil of anointing was used for all major offices (giving the label with the passive adjective “*mashiah*” (or “messiah”) to anyone anointed. In the further revelation of Scripture, the oil came to signify the enablement as well as the setting apart, and often the Holy Spirit came on the person at the anointing with oil. The olive oil was a symbol of the Spirit in the OT as well (Zech 4:4-6). And in the NT “anointing” signifies empowerment by the Holy Spirit for service.

4 tc Hebrew has both the objective pronoun “them” and the names “Aaron and his sons.” Neither the LXX nor Leviticus 8:13 has “Aaron and his sons,” suggesting that this may have been a later gloss in the text.

5 tn Heb “and you will fill the hand” and so “consecrate” or “ordain.” The verb draws together the individual acts of the process.

6 tn The verb is singular, agreeing with the first of the compound subject – Aaron.

7 sn The details of these offerings have to be determined from a careful study of Leviticus. There is a good deal of debate over the meaning of laying hands on the animals. At the very least it identifies the animal formally as their sacrifice. But it may very well indicate that the animal is a substitute for them as well, given the nature and the effect of the sacrifices.

8 sn This act seems to have signified the efficacious nature of the blood, since the horns represented power. This is part of the ritual of the sin offering for laity, because before the priests become priests they are treated as laity. The offering is better described as a purification offering rather than a sin offering, because it was offered, according to Leviticus, for both sins and impurities. Moreover, it was offered primarily to purify the sanctuary so that the once-defiled or sinful person could enter (see J. Milgrom, *Leviticus* [AB]).

9 tn The phrase “rest of” has been supplied in the translation for clarification.

10 tn S. R. Driver suggests that this is the appendix or an appendix, both here and in v. 22 (*Exodus*, 320). “The surplus, the appendage of liver, found with cow, sheep, or goat, but not with humans: *Lobus caudatus*” (*HALOT* 453 s.v. יִתְרָא).

11 tn Heb “turn [them] into sweet smoke” since the word is used for burning incense.

sn The giving of the visceral organs and the fat has received various explanations. The fat represented the best, and the best was to go to God. If the animal is a substitute, then the visceral organs represent the will of the worshiper in an act of surrender to God.

12 tn Heb “burn with fire.”

13 sn This is to be done because there is no priesthood yet. Once they are installed, then the sin/purification offering is to be eaten by the officiating priests as a sign that the offering was received. But priests could not consume their own sin offering.

14 sn There were two kinds of “purification offering,” those made with confession for sin and those made without. The title needs to cover both of them, and if it is called in the traditional way “the sin offering,” that will convey that when people offered it for skin diseases, menstruation, or having babies, they had sinned. That was not the case. Moreover, it is usual to translate the names of the sacrifices by what they do more than what they cover – so peace offering, reparation offering, and purification offering.

15 tn Heb “turn to sweet smoke.”

16 sn According to Lev 1 the burnt offering (often called whole burnt offering, except that the skins were usually given to the priests for income) was an atoning sacrifice. By consuming the entire animal, God was indicating that he had completely accepted the worshiper, and as it was a sweet smelling fire sacrifice, he was indicating that he was pleased to accept it. By offering the entire animal, the worshiper was indicating on his part a complete surrender to God.

17 tn The word אִשֶּׁה (*isheh*) has traditionally been translated “an offering made with fire” or the like, because it appears so obviously connected with fire. But further evidence from Ugaritic suggests that it might only mean “a gift” (see Milgrom, *Leviticus* 1-16, 161).

18 sn These sections show that the priest had to be purified or cleansed from defilement of sin and also be atoned for and accepted by the LORD through the blood of the sacrifice. The principles from these two sacrifices should be basic to anyone seeking to serve God.

the right ear of Aaron, on the tip of the right ear of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand, and on the big toe of their right foot,¹ and then splash the blood all around on the altar. **29:21** You are to take some of the blood that is on the altar and some of the anointing oil and sprinkle it² on Aaron, on his garments, on his sons, and on his sons' garments with him, so that he may be holy,³ he and his garments along with his sons and his sons' garments.

29:22 "You are to take from the ram the fat, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the lobe⁴ of the liver, the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, and the right thigh – for it is the ram for consecration⁵ – **29:23** and one round flat cake of bread, one perforated cake of oiled bread, and one wafer from the basket of bread made without yeast that is before the LORD. **29:24** You are to put all these⁶ in Aaron's hands⁷ and in his sons' hands, and you are to wave them as a wave offering⁸ before the LORD. **29:25** Then you are to take them from their hands and burn⁹ them¹⁰ on the altar for a burnt offering, for a soothing aroma before the LORD. It is an offering made by fire to the LORD. **29:26** You are to take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration; you are to wave it as a wave offering before the LORD, and it is to be your share. **29:27** You are to sanctify the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the contribution,¹¹ which were waved and

lifted up as a contribution from the ram of consecration, from what belongs to Aaron and to his sons. **29:28** It is to belong to Aaron and to his sons from the Israelites, by a perpetual ordinance, for it is a contribution. It is to be a contribution from the Israelites from their peace offerings, their contribution to the LORD.

29:29 "The holy garments that belong to Aaron are to belong to his sons after him, so that they may be anointed¹² in them and consecrated¹³ in them. **29:30** The priest who succeeds him¹⁴ from his sons, when he first comes¹⁵ to the tent of meeting to minister in the Holy Place, is to wear them for seven days.¹⁶

29:31 "You are to take the ram of the consecration and cook¹⁷ its meat in a holy place.¹⁸ **29:32** Aaron and his sons are to eat the meat of the ram and the bread that was in the basket at the entrance of the tent of meeting. **29:33** They are to eat those things by which atonement was made¹⁹ to consecrate and to set them apart, but no one else²⁰ may eat them, for they are holy. **29:34** If any of the meat from the consecration offerings²¹ or any of the bread is left over²² until

¹ **sn** By this ritual the priests were set apart completely to the service of God. The ear represented the organ of hearing (as in "ears you have dug" in Ps 40 or "awakens my ear" in Isa 50), and this had to be set apart to God so that they could hear the Word of God. The thumb and the hand represented the instrument to be used for all ministry, and so everything that they "put their hand to" had to be dedicated to God and appropriate for his service. The toe set the foot apart to God, meaning that the walk of the priest had to be consecrated – where he went, how he conducted himself, what life he lived, all belonged to God now.

² **tn** Here "it" has been supplied.

³ **tn** The verb in this instance is Qal and not Piel, "to be holy" rather than "sanctify." The result of all this ritual is that Aaron and his sons will be set aside and distinct in their life and their service.

⁴ **tn** S. R. Driver suggests that this is the appendix or an appendix, both here and in v. 13 (*Exodus*, 320). "The surplus, the appendage of liver, found with cow, sheep, or goat, but not with humans: *Lobus caudatus*" (*HALOT* 453 s.v. לִבְיָדָה).

⁵ **tn** *Heb* "filling."

⁶ **tn** *Heb* "the whole" or "the all."

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "palms."

⁸ **tn** The "wave offering" is רְנוּחָה (*rēnufah*); it is, of course, cognate with the verb, but an adverbial accusative rather than the direct object. In Lev 23 this seems to be a sacrificial gesture of things that are for the priests – but they present them first to Yahweh and then receive them back from him. So the waving is not side to side, but forward to Yahweh and then back to the priest. Here it is just an induction into that routine, since this is the ordination of the priests and the gifts are not yet theirs. So this will all be burned on the altar.

⁹ **tn** "turn to sweet smoke."

¹⁰ **tn** "them" has been supplied.

¹¹ **sn** These are the two special priestly offerings: the wave offering (from the verb "to wave") and the "presentation offering" (older English: heave offering; from a verb "to be high," in Hiphil meaning "to lift up," an item separated from the offering, a contribution). The two are then clarified with two corresponding relative clauses containing two Hophals: "which was waved and which was presented." In making sacrifices,

the breast and the thigh belong to the priests.

¹² **tn** The construction is an infinitive construct with a *lamed* (־) preposition. The form simply means "for anointing," but it serves to express the purpose or result of their inheriting the sacred garments.

¹³ **tn** This form is a Piel infinitive construct with a *lamed* (־) preposition. It literally reads "for filling the hands," the idiom used throughout this chapter for ordination or installation. Here too it has a parallel use of purpose or result.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "after him"; NCV, NLT "after Aaron."

¹⁵ **tn** The text just has the relative pronoun and the imperfect tense. It could be translated "who comes/enters." But the context seems to indicate that this would be when he first comes to the tent to begin his tenure as High Priest, and so a temporal clause makes this clear. "First" has been supplied.

¹⁶ **tn** "Seven days" is an adverbial accusative of time. The ritual of ordination is to be repeated for seven days, and so they are to remain there in the court in full dress.

¹⁷ **tn** Or "boil" (see Lev 8:31).

¹⁸ **sn** The "holy place" must be in the courtyard of the sanctuary. Lev 8:31 says it is to be cooked at the entrance of the tent of meeting. Here it says it will be eaten there as well. This, then, becomes a communion sacrifice, a peace offering which was a shared meal. Eating a communal meal in a holy place was meant to signify that the worshippers and the priests were at peace with God.

¹⁹ **tn** The clause is a relative clause modifying "those things," the direct object of the verb "eat." The relative clause has a resumptive pronoun: "which atonement was made by them" becomes "by which atonement was made." The verb is a Pual perfect of כִּפֶּר (*kippēr*, "to expiate, atone, pacify").

²⁰ **tn** The Hebrew word is "stranger, alien" (זָר, *zar*). But in this context it means anyone who is not a priest (see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 324).

²¹ **tn** Or "ordination offerings" (*Heb* "fillings").

²² **tn** The verb in the conditional clause is a Niphal imperfect of יָתַר (*yatar*); this verb is repeated in the next clause (as a Niphal participle) as the direct object of the verb "you will burn" (a Qal perfect with a *vav* [ו] consecutive to form the instruction).

morning, then you are to burn up¹ what is left over. It must not be eaten,² because it is holy.

29:35 “Thus you are to do for Aaron and for his sons, according to all that I have commanded you; you are to consecrate them³ for⁴ seven days.

29:36 Every day you are to prepare a bull for a purification offering⁵ for atonement.⁶ You are to purge⁷ the altar by making atonement⁸ for it, and you are to anoint it to set it apart as holy. **29:37** For seven days⁹ you are to make atonement for the altar and set it apart as holy. Then the altar will be most holy.¹⁰ Anything that touches the altar will be holy.¹¹

29:38 “Now this is what you are to prepare¹² on the altar every day continually: two lambs a year old. **29:39** The first lamb you are to prepare in the morning, and the second lamb you are to prepare around sundown.¹³ **29:40** With the first

lamb offer a tenth of an ephah¹⁴ of fine flour mixed with a fourth of a hin¹⁵ of oil from pressed olives, and a fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering. **29:41** The second lamb you are to offer around sundown; you are to prepare for it the same meal offering as for the morning and the same drink offering, for a soothing aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD.

29:42 “This will be a regular¹⁶ burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet¹⁷ with you to speak to you there. **29:43** There I will meet¹⁸ with the Israelites, and it will be set apart as holy by my glory.¹⁹

29:44 “So I will set apart as holy²⁰ the tent of meeting and the altar, and I will set apart as holy Aaron and his sons, that they may minister as priests to me. **29:45** I will reside²¹ among the

¹ tn Heb “burn with fire.”

² tn The verb is a Niphal imperfect negated. It expresses the prohibition against eating this, but in the passive voice: “it will not be eaten,” or stronger, “it must not be eaten.”

³ tn Heb “you will fill their hand.”

⁴ tn The “seven days” is the adverbial accusative explaining that the ritual of the filling should continue daily for a week. Leviticus makes it clear that they are not to leave the sanctuary.

⁵ tn The construction uses a genitive: “a bull of the sin offering,” which means, a bull that is designated for a sin (or better, purification) offering.

⁶ sn It is difficult to understand how this verse is to be harmonized with the other passages. The ceremony in the earlier passages deals with atonement made for the priests, for people. But here it is the altar that is being sanctified. The “sin [purification] offering” seems to be for purification of the sanctuary and altar to receive people in their worship.

⁷ tn The verb is הִטִּיתָ (v²hitte’ta), a Piel perfect of the word usually translated “to sin.” Here it may be interpreted as a privative Piel (as in Ps 51:7 [9]), with the sense of “un-sin” or “remove sin.” It could also be interpreted as related to the word for “sin offering,” and so be a denominative verb. It means “to purify, cleanse.” The Hebrews understood that sin and contamination could corrupt and pollute even things, and so they had to be purged.

⁸ tn The construction is a Piel infinitive construct in an adverbial clause. The preposition *bet* (בְּ) that begins the clause could be taken as a temporal preposition, but in this context it seems to express the means by which the altar was purged of contamination – “in your making atonement” is “by [your] making atonement.”

⁹ tn Once again this is an adverbial accusative of time. Each day for seven days the ritual at the altar is to be followed.

¹⁰ tn The construction is the superlative genitive: “holy of holies,” or “most holy.”

¹¹ sn This line states an unusual principle, meant to preserve the sanctity of the altar. S. R. Driver explains it this way (*Exodus*, 325): If anything comes in contact with the altar, it becomes holy and must remain in the sanctuary for Yahweh’s use. If a person touches the altar, he likewise becomes holy and cannot return to the profane regions. He will be given over to God to be dealt with as God pleases. Anyone who was not qualified to touch the altar did not dare approach it, for contact would have meant that he was no longer free to leave but was God’s holy possession – and might pay for it with his life (see *Exod* 30:29; *Lev* 6:18b, 27; and *Ezek* 46:20).

¹² tn The verb is “you will do,” “you will make.” It clearly refers to offering the animals on the altar, but may emphasize all the preparation that was involved in the process.

¹³ tn Heb “between the two evenings” or “between the two settings” (בֵּין הַתְּשִׁיבִים, *ben ha’arbayim*). This expression has had a good deal of discussion. (1) *Tg. Onq.* says “between the two

sons,” which the Talmud explains as the time between the sunset and the time the stars become visible. More technically, the first “evening” would be the time between sunset and the appearance of the crescent moon, and the second “evening” the next hour, or from the appearance of the crescent moon to full darkness (see *Deut* 16:6 – “at the going down of the sun”). (2) Saadia, Rashi, and Kimchi say the first evening is when the sun begins to decline in the west and cast its shadows, and the second evening is the beginning of night. (3) The view adopted by the Pharisees and the Talmudists (*b. Pesahim* 61a) is that the first evening is when the heat of the sun begins to decrease, and the second evening begins at sunset, or, roughly from 3-5 p.m. The Mishnah (*m. Pesahim* 5:1) indicates the lamb was killed about 2:30 p.m. – anything before noon was not valid. S. R. Driver concludes from this survey that the first view is probably the best, although the last view was the traditionally accepted one (*Exodus*, 89-90). Late afternoon or early evening seems to be intended, the time of twilight perhaps.

¹⁴ tn The phrase “of an ephah” has been supplied for clarity (cf. *Num* 28:5). The ephah was a commonly used dry measure whose capacity is now uncertain: “Quotations given for the ephah vary from ca. 45 to 20 liters” (C. Houtman, *Exodus*, 2:340-41).

¹⁵ tn “Hin” is a transliterated Hebrew word that seems to have an Egyptian derivation. The amount of liquid measured by a hin is uncertain: “Its presumed capacity varies from about 3.5 liters to 7.5 liters” (C. Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:550).

¹⁶ tn The translation has “regular” instead of “continually,” because they will be preparing this twice a day.

¹⁷ tn The relative clause identifies the place in front of the Tent as the place that Yahweh would meet Moses. The main verb of the clause is אִוָּיַדְתִּי (*iiva’ed*), a Niphal imperfect of the verb יָוַדְתִּי (*ya’ad*), the verb that is cognate to the name “tent of meeting” – hence the name. This clause leads into the next four verses.

¹⁸ tn The verb now is a Niphal perfect from the same root, with a *vav* (ו) consecutive. It simply continues the preceding verb, announcing now that he would meet the people.

¹⁹ tn Or “will be sanctified by my glory” (KJV and ASV both similar).

sn The tabernacle, as well as the priests and the altar, will be sanctified by the power of Yahweh’s presence. The reference here is to when Yahweh enters the sanctuary in all his glory (see *Exod* 40:34f.).

²⁰ tn This verse affirms the same point as the last, but now with an active verb: “I will set apart as holy” (or “I will sanctify”). This verse, then, probably introduces the conclusion of the chapter: “So I will....”

²¹ tn The verb has the root שָׁכַן (*shakan*), from which came the word for the dwelling place, or sanctuary, itself (מִשְׁכָּן, *mishkan*). It is also used for the description of “the Shekinah glory.” God is affirming that he will reside in the midst of his people.

Israelites, and I will be their God, 29:46 and they will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out from the land of Egypt, so that I may reside among them. I am the LORD their God.

The Altar of Incense

30:1¹ “You are to make an altar for burning incense;² you are to make it of³ acacia wood.⁴ **30:2** Its length is to be a foot and a half⁵ and its width a foot and a half; it will be square. Its height is to be three feet,⁶ with its horns of one piece with it.⁷ **30:3** You are to overlay it with pure gold – its top,⁸ its four walls,⁹ and its horns – and make a surrounding border of gold for it.¹⁰ **30:4** You are to make two gold rings for it under its border, on its two flanks; you are to make them on its two sides.¹¹ The rings¹² will be places¹³ for poles to carry it with. **30:5** You are to make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold.

30:6 “You are to put it in front of the curtain that is before the ark of the testimony (before the

atonement lid that is over the testimony), where I will meet you. **30:7** Aaron is to burn sweet incense¹⁴ on it morning by morning; when he attends¹⁵ to the lamps he is to burn incense.¹⁶ **30:8** When Aaron sets up the lamps around sundown he is to burn incense on it; it is to be a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. **30:9** You must not offer strange incense on it, nor burnt offering, nor meal offering, and you must not pour out a drink offering on it. **30:10** Aaron is to make atonement on its horns once in the year with some of the blood of the sin offering for atonement;¹⁷ once in the year¹⁸ he is to make atonement on it throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.”¹⁹

The Ransom Money

30:11²⁰ The LORD spoke to Moses:²¹ **30:12** “When you take a census²² of the Israelites according to their number,²³ then each man is to

¹⁴ **tn** The text uses a cognate accusative (“incense”) with the verb “to burn” or “to make into incense/sweet smoke.” Then, the noun “sweet spices” is added in apposition to clarify the incense as sweet.

¹⁵ **tn** The Hebrew is בִּהְיִיבוֹ (b^hheivo), a Hiphil infinitive construct serving in a temporal clause. The Hebrew verb means “to make good” and so in this context “to fix” or “to dress.” This refers to cleansing and trimming the lamps.

¹⁶ **sn** The point of the little golden altar of incense is normally for intercessory prayer, and then at the Day of Atonement for blood applied atonement. The instructions for making it show that God wanted his people to make a place for prayer. The instructions for its use show that God expects that the requests of his people will be pleasing to him.

¹⁷ **tn** The word “atonements” (plural in Hebrew) is a genitive showing the result or product of the sacrifice made.

¹⁸ **sn** This ruling presupposes that the instruction for the Day of Atonement has been given, or at the very least, is to be given shortly. That is the one day of the year that all sin and all ritual impurity would be removed.

¹⁹ **sn** The phrase “most holy to the LORD” means that the altar cannot be used for any other purpose than what is stated here.

²⁰ **sn** This brief section has been interpreted a number of ways by biblical scholars (for a good survey and discussion, see B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 829-35). In this context the danger of erecting and caring for a sanctuary may have been in view. A census would be taken to count the losses and to cover the danger of coming into such proximity with the holy place; payment was made to ransom the lives of the people numbered so that they would not die. The money collected would then be used for the care of the sanctuary. The principle was fairly straightforward: Those numbered among the redeemed of the LORD were to support the work of the LORD to maintain their fellowship with the covenant. The passage is fairly easy to outline: I. Every covenant member must give a ransom for his life to avoid death (11-12); II. The ransom is the same for all, whether rich or poor (13-15); and III. The ransom money supports the sanctuary as a memorial for the ransomed (16).

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “and Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying.” This full means for introducing a quotation from the Lord is used again in 30:17, 22; 31:1; and 40:1. It appears first in 6:10. Cynthia L. Miller discusses its use in detail (*The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative*, 373-86).

²² **tn** The expression is “when you take [lift up] the sum [head] of the Israelites.”

²³ **tn** The form is לִפְיָדֵיהֶם (lifqadehem, “according to those that are numbered of/by them”) from the verb פָּקַד (paqad, “to visit”). But the idea of this word seems more to be that of changing or determining the destiny, and so “appoint” and “number” become clear categories of meaning for the word.

¹ **sn** Why this section has been held until now is a mystery. One would have expected to find it with the instructions for the other furnishings. The widespread contemporary view that it was composed later does not answer the question, it merely moves the issue to the work of an editor rather than the author. N. M. Sarna notes concerning the items in chapter 30 that “all the materials for these final items were anticipated in the list of invited donations in 25:3-6” and that they were not needed for installing Aaron and his sons (*Exodus* [JPSTC], 193). Verses 1-10 can be divided into three sections: the instructions for building the incense altar (1-5), its placement (6), and its proper use (7-10).

² **tn** The expression is מִזְבֵּחַ מִקְטָר קִטְרוֹת (mizbeakh miqtar q^toret), either “an altar, namely an altar of incense,” or “an altar, [for] burning incense.” The second noun is “altar of incense,” although some suggest it is an active noun meaning “burning.” If the former, then it is in apposition to the word for “altar” (which is not in construct). The last noun is “incense” or “sweet smoke.” It either qualifies the “altar of incense” or serves as the object of the active noun. B. Jacob says that in order to designate that this altar be used only for incense, the Torah prepared the second word for this passage alone. It specifies the kind of altar this is (*Exodus*, 828).

³ **tn** This is an adverbial accusative explaining the material used in building the altar.

⁴ **sn** See M. Haran, “The Uses of Incense in Ancient Israel Ritual,” *VT* 10 (1960): 113-15; N. Glueck, “Incense Altars,” *Translating and Understanding the Old Testament*, 325-29.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “a cubit.”

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “two cubits.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “its horns from it.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “roof.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “its walls around.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and make for it border gold around.” The verb is a consecutive perfect. See Exod 25:11, where the ark also has such a molding.

¹¹ **sn** Since it was a small altar, it needed only two rings, one on either side, in order to be carried. The second clause clarifies that the rings should be on the sides, the right and the left, as you approach the altar.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “And it”; this refers to the rings collectively in their placement on the box, and so the word “rings” has been used to clarify the referent for the modern reader.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “for houses.”

pay a ransom¹ for his life to the LORD when you number them,² so that there will be no plague among them when you number them. **30:13** Everyone who crosses over to those who are numbered³ is to pay this: a half shekel⁴ according to the shekel of the sanctuary⁵ (a shekel weighs twenty gerahs). The half shekel is to be an offering⁶ to the LORD. **30:14** Everyone who crosses over to those numbered, from twenty years old and up, is to pay an offering to the LORD. **30:15** The rich are not to increase it,⁷ and the poor are not to pay less than the half shekel when giving⁸ the offering of the LORD, to make atonement⁹ for your lives. **30:16** You are to receive the atonement money¹⁰ from the Israelites and give it for

the service¹¹ of the tent of meeting. It will be a memorial¹² for the Israelites before the LORD, to make atonement¹³ for your lives.”

The Bronze Laver

30:17¹⁴ The LORD spoke to Moses:¹⁵ **30:18** “You are also to make a large bronze¹⁶ basin with a bronze stand¹⁷ for washing. You are to put it between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it,¹⁸ **30:19** and Aaron and his sons must wash their hands and their feet from it.¹⁹ **30:20** When they enter²⁰ the tent of meeting, they must wash with²¹ water so that they do not die.²² Also, when they approach²³ the altar to minister by burning incense²⁴ as an offering made by fire²⁵ to the LORD, **30:21** they must wash²⁶ their hands and their feet so that they do not die. And this²⁷ will be a perpetual ordinance

Here it simply refers to the census, but when this word is used for a census it often involves mustering an army for a military purpose. Here there is no indication of a war, but it may be laying down the principle that when they should do this, here is the price. B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 835) uses Num 31 as a good illustration, showing that the warrior was essentially a murderer, if he killed anyone in battle. For this reason his blood was forfeit; if he survived he must pay a כֹּפֶר (*kofer*) because every human life possesses value and must be atoned for. The payment during the census represented a “presumptive ransom” so that they could not be faulted for what they might do in war.

1 tn The “ransom” is כֹּפֶר (*kofer*), a word related to words translated “atone” and “atonement.” Here the noun refers to what is paid for the life. The idea is that of delivering or redeeming by a substitute – here the substitute is the money. If they paid the amount, their lives would be safe (W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “Exodus,” *EBC* 2:473).

2 tn The temporal clause uses a preposition, an infinitive construct, and then an accusative. The subject is supplied: “in numbering them” means “when [you] number them.” The verb could also be rendered “when you muster them.”

3 sn Each man was to pass in front of the counting officer and join those already counted on the other side.

4 sn The half shekel weight of silver would be about one-fifth of an ounce (6 grams).

5 sn It appears that some standard is in view for the amount of a shekel weight. The sanctuary shekel is sometimes considered to be twice the value of the ordinary shekel. The “gerah,” also of uncertain meaning, was mentioned as a reference point for the ancient reader to understand the value of the required payment. It may also be that the expression meant “a sacred shekel” and looked at the purpose more – a shekel for sanctuary dues. This would mean that the standard of the shekel weight was set because it was the traditional amount of sacred dues (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 333). “Though there is no certainty, the shekel is said to weigh about 11,5 grams.... Whether an official standard is meant [by ‘sanctuary shekel’] or whether the sanctuary shekel had a different weight than the ‘ordinary’ shekel is not known” (C. Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:181).

6 tn Or “contribution” (תְּרוּמָה, *t^hrumah*).

7 tn Or “pay more.”

8 tn The form is לָתֵת (*latet*), the Qal infinitive construct with the *lamed* preposition. The infinitive here is explaining the preceding verbs. They are not to increase or diminish the amount “in paying the offering.” The construction approximates a temporal clause.

9 tn This infinitive construct (לְכַפֵּר, *l^hkhapper*) provides the purpose of the giving the offering – to atone.

10 tn Heb “the silver of the atonements.” The genitive here is the result (as in “sheep of slaughter”) telling what the money will be used for (see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 11, §44).

11 sn The idea of “service” is maintenance and care of the sanctuary and its service, meaning the morning and evening sacrifices and the other elements to be used.

12 sn S. R. Driver says this is “to keep Jehovah in continual remembrance of the ransom which had been paid for their lives” (*Exodus*, 334).

13 tn The infinitive could be taken in a couple of ways here. It could be an epexegetical infinitive: “making atonement.” Or it could be the infinitive expressing result: “so that atonement will be made for your lives.”

14 sn Another piece of furniture is now introduced, the laver, or washing basin. It was a round (the root means to be round) basin for holding water, but it had to be up on a pedestal or base to let water run out (through taps of some kind) for the priests to wash – they could not simply dip dirty hands into the basin. This was for the priests primarily to wash their hands and feet before entering the tent. It stood in the courtyard between the altar and the tent. No dimensions are given. The passage can be divided into three sections: the instructions (17-18), the rules for washing (19-20), and the reminder that this is a perpetual statute.

15 tn Heb “and Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying.”

16 sn The metal for this object was obtained from the women from their mirrors (see Exod 38:8).

17 tn Heb “and its stand bronze.”

18 tn The form is the adverb “there” with the directive *qamets-he* (הָ).

19 tn That is, from water from it.

20 tn The form is an infinitive construct with the temporal preposition *bet* (בְּ), and a suffixed subjective genitive: “in their going in,” or, whenever they enter.

21 tn “Water” is an adverbial accusative of means, and so is translated “with water.” Gesenius classifies this with verbs of “covering with something.” But he prefers to emend the text with a preposition (see GKC 369 §117.y, n. 1).

22 tn The verb is a Qal imperfect with a nuance of final imperfect. The purpose/result clause here is indicated only with the conjunction: “and they do not die.” But clearly from the context this is the intended result of their washing – it is in order that they not die.

23 tn Here, too, the infinitive is used in a temporal clause construction. The verb נָגַשׁ (*nagash*) is the common verb used for drawing near to the altar to make offerings – the official duties of the priest.

24 tn The text uses two infinitives construct: “to minister to burn incense”; the first is the general term and expresses the purpose of the drawing near, and the second infinitive is epexegetical, explaining the first infinitive.

25 tn The translation “as an offering made by fire” is a standard rendering of the one word in the text that appears to refer to “fire.” Milgrom and others contend that it simply means a “gift” (*Leviticus* 1-16, 161).

26 tn Heb “and [then] they will wash.”

27 tn The verb is “it will be.”

for them and for their descendants¹ throughout their generations.”²

Oil and Incense

30:22³ The LORD spoke to Moses.⁴ **30:23** “Take⁵ choice spices:⁶ twelve and a half pounds⁷ of free-flowing myrrh,⁸ half that – about six and a quarter pounds – of sweet-smelling cinnamon, six and a quarter pounds of sweet-smelling cane, **30:24** and twelve and a half pounds of cassia, all weighed⁹ according to the sanctuary shekel, and four quarts¹⁰ of olive oil. **30:25** You are to make this¹¹ into¹² a sacred anointing oil, a perfumed compound,¹³ the work of a perfumer. It will be sacred anointing oil.

¹ **tn** *Heb* “for his seed.”

² **tn** Or “for generations to come”; it literally is “to their generations.”

sn The symbolic meaning of washing has been taught throughout the ages. This was a practical matter of cleaning hands and feet, but it was also symbolic of purification before Yahweh. It was an outward sign of inner spiritual cleansing, or forgiveness. Jesus washed the disciples feet (Jn 13) to show this same teaching; he asked the disciples if they knew what he had done (so it was more than washing feet). In this passage the theological points for the outline would be these: I. God provides the means of cleansing; II. Cleansing is a prerequisite for participating in the worship, and III. (Believers) priests must regularly appropriate God’s provision of cleansing.

³ **sn** The chapter ends with these two sections. The oil (22-33) is the mark of consecration, and the incense (34-38) is a mark of pleasing service, especially in prayer. So the essence of the message of the chapter is that the servants of God must be set apart by the Spirit for ministry and must be pleasing to God in the ministry.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying.”

⁵ **tn** The construction uses the imperative “take,” but before it is the independent pronoun to add emphasis to it. After the imperative is the ethical dative (lit. “to you”) to stress the task to Moses as a personal responsibility: “and you, take to yourself.”

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “spices head.” This must mean the chief spices, or perhaps the top spice, meaning fine spices or choice spices. See Song 4:14; Ezek 27:22.

⁷ **tn** Or “500 shekels.” Verse 24 specifies that the sanctuary shekel was the unit for weighing the spices. The total of 1500 shekels for the four spices is estimated at between 77 and 100 pounds, or 17 to 22 kilograms, depending on how much a shekel weighed (C. Houtman, *Exodus*, 3:576).

⁸ **sn** Myrrh is an aromatic substance that flows from the bark of certain trees in Arabia and Africa and then hardens. “The hardened globules of the gum appear also to have been ground into a powder that would have been easy to store and would have been poured from a container” (J. Durham, *Exodus* [WBC], 3:406).

⁹ **tn** The words “all weighed” are added for clarity in English.

¹⁰ **tn** Or “a hin.” A hin of oil is estimated at around one gallon (J. Durham, *Exodus* [WBC], 3:406).

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “it.”

¹² **tn** The word “oil” is an adverbial accusative, indicating the product that results from the verb (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, §52).

¹³ **tn** The somewhat rare words rendered “a perfumed compound” are both associated with a verbal root having to do with mixing spices and other ingredients to make fragrant ointments. They are used with the next phrase, “the work of a perfumer,” to describe the finished oil as a special mixture of aromatic spices and one requiring the knowledge and skills of an experienced maker.

30:26 “With it you are to anoint the tent of meeting, the ark of the testimony, **30:27** the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, the altar of incense, **30:28** the altar for the burnt offering and all its utensils, and the laver and its base. **30:29** So you are to sanctify them,¹⁴ and they will be most holy;¹⁵ anything that touches them will be holy.¹⁶

30:30 “You are to anoint Aaron and his sons and¹⁷ sanctify them, so that they may minister as my priests. **30:31** And you are to tell the Israelites: ‘This is to be my sacred anointing oil throughout your generations. **30:32** It must not be applied¹⁸ to people’s bodies, and you must not make any like it with the same recipe. It is holy, and it must be holy to you. **30:33** Whoever makes perfume like it and whoever puts any of it on someone not a priest¹⁹ will be cut off²⁰ from his people.’”

30:34 The LORD said to Moses: “Take²¹ spices, gum resin,²² onycha,²³ galbanum,²⁴ and pure frankincense²⁵ of equal amounts²⁶ **30:35** and make it into an incense,²⁷ a perfume,²⁸ the work of a perfumer. It is to be finely ground,²⁹ and

¹⁴ **tn** The verb is a Piel perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive; in this verse it is summarizing or explaining what the anointing has accomplished. This is the effect of the anointing (see Exod 29:36).

¹⁵ **tn** This is the superlative genitive again, *Heb* “holy of holies.”

¹⁶ **tn** See Exod 29:37; as before, this could refer to anything or anyone touching the sanctified items.

¹⁷ **tn** The perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive follows the imperfect of instruction; it may be equal to the instruction, but more likely shows the purpose or result of the act.

¹⁸ **tn** Without an expressed subject, the verb may be treated as a passive. Any common use, as in personal hygiene, would be a complete desecration.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “a stranger,” meaning someone not ordained a priest.

²⁰ **sn** The rabbinic interpretation of this is that it is a penalty imposed by heaven, that the life will be cut short and the person could die childless.

²¹ **tn** The construction is “take to you,” which could be left in that literal sense, but more likely the suffix is an ethical dative, stressing the subject of the imperative.

²² **sn** This is from a word that means “to drip”; the spice is a balsam that drips from a resinous tree.

²³ **sn** This may be a plant, or it may be from a species of mollusks; it is mentioned in Ugaritic and Akkadian; it gives a pungent odor when burnt.

²⁴ **sn** This is a gum from plants of the genus *Ferula*; it has an unpleasant odor, but when mixed with others is pleasant.

²⁵ **tn** The word “spice” is repeated here, suggesting that the first three formed half of the ingredient and this spice the other half – but this is conjecture (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 400).

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “of each part there will be an equal part.”

²⁷ **tn** This is an accusative of result or product.

²⁸ **tn** The word is in apposition to “incense,” further defining the kind of incense that is to be made.

²⁹ **tn** The word מְמֻלָּחַת (*m^hmullakh*), a passive participle, is usually taken to mean “salted.” Since there is no meaning like that for the Pual form, the word probably should be taken as “mixed,” as in Rashi and *Tg. Onq.* Seasoning with salt would work if it were food, but since it is not food, if it means “salted” it would be a symbol of what was sound and whole for the covenant. Some have thought that it would have helped the incense burn quickly with more smoke.

pure and sacred. **30:36** You are to beat some of it very fine and put some of it before the ark of the testimony in the tent of meeting where I will meet with you; it is to be most holy to you. **30:37** And the incense that you are to make, you must not make for yourselves using the same recipe; it is to be most holy to you, belonging to the LORD. **30:38** Whoever makes anything like it, to use as perfume,¹ will be cut off from his people.”

Willing Artisans

31:1² The LORD spoke to Moses:³ **31:2** “See, I have chosen⁴ Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, **31:3** and I have filled him with the Spirit of God⁵ in skill,⁶ in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds⁷ of craftsmanship, **31:4** to make artistic designs⁸ for work with gold, with silver, and with bronze, **31:5** and with cutting and setting stone, and with cutting wood, to work in all kinds of craftsmanship. **31:6** Moreover,⁹ I have also given him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, and I have given ability to all the spe-

cially skilled,¹⁰ that they may make¹¹ everything I have commanded you: **31:7** the tent of meeting, the ark of the testimony, the atonement lid that is on it, all the furnishings¹² of the tent, **31:8** the table with its utensils, the pure lampstand with all its utensils, the altar of incense, **31:9** the altar for the burnt offering with all its utensils, the large basin with its base, **31:10** the woven garments, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons, to minister as priests, **31:11** the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the Holy Place. They will make all these things just as I have commanded you.”

Sabbath Observance

31:12¹³ The LORD said to Moses,¹⁴ **31:13** “Tell the Israelites, ‘Surely you must keep my Sabbaths,¹⁵ for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.’¹⁶ **31:14** So you must keep the Sabbath, for it is holy for you. Everyone who defiles it¹⁷ must surely be put to death; indeed,¹⁸ if anyone does¹⁹ any²⁰ work on it, then that

¹ **tn** Or to smell it, to use for the maker’s own pleasure.

² **sn** The next unit describes the preparation of skilled workers to build all that has been listed now for several chapters. This chapter would have been the bridge to the building of the sanctuary (35-39) if it were not for the idolatrous interlude. God called individuals and prepared them by his Spirit to be skilled to do the work for the tabernacle. If this were the substance of an exposition, it would clearly be a message on gifted people doing the work – close to the spiritual lesson of Ephesians 4. There would be two levels of meaning: the physical, which looks at the skilled artisans providing for a place to worship Yahweh, and the spiritual, which would bring in the Spirit-filled servants of God participating in building up his kingdom.

³ **tn** *Heb* “and Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “called by name.” This expression means that the person was specifically chosen for some important task (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 342). See the expression with Cyrus in Isa 45:3-4.

⁵ **sn** The expression in the Bible means that the individual was given special, supernatural enablement to do what God wanted done. It usually is said of someone with exceptional power or ability. The image of “filling” usually means under the control of the Spirit, so that the Spirit is the dominant force in the life.

⁶ **sn** The following qualities are the ways in which the Spirit’s enablement will be displayed. “Skill” is the ability to produce something valuable to God and the community, “understanding” is the ability to distinguish between things, to perceive the best way to follow, and “knowledge” is the experiential awareness of how things are done.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and in all work”; “all” means “all kinds of” here.

⁸ **tn** The expression is לְיָשֵׁב מַחֲשָׁבוֹת (*lakhshov makhshavot*, “to devise devices”). The infinitive emphasizes that Bezalel will be able to design or plan works that are artistic or skillful. He will think thoughts or devise the plans, and then he will execute them in silver or stone or whatever other material he uses.

⁹ **tn** The expression uses the independent personal pronoun (“and I”) with the deictic particle (“behold”) to enforce the subject of the verb – “and I, indeed I have given.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and in the heart of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom.”

¹¹ **sn** The verse means that there were a good number of very skilled and trained artisans that could come to do the work that God wanted done. But God’s Spirit further endowed them with additional wisdom and skill for the work that had to be done.

¹² **tn** The form is a perfect with וָאֵן (vav) consecutive. The form at this place shows the purpose or the result of what has gone before, and so it is rendered “that they may make.”

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “all the vessels of the tent.”

¹⁴ **sn** There are some questions about the arrangement of the book. The placement of this section here, however, should come as no surprise. After the instructions and preparation for work, a Sabbath day when work could not be done had to be legislated. In all that they were going to do, they must not violate the Sabbath.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and Yahweh said (אָמַר, ‘amar) to Moses, saying.”

¹⁶ **sn** The instruction for the Sabbath at this point seems rather abrupt, but it follows logically the extended plans of building the sanctuary. B. Jacob, following some of the earlier treatments, suggests that these are specific rules given for the duration of the building of the sanctuary (*Exodus*, 844). The Sabbath day is a day of complete cessation; no labor or work could be done. The point here is that God’s covenant people must faithfully keep the sign of the covenant as a living commemoration of the finished work of Yahweh, and as an active part in their sanctification. See also H. Routtenberg, “The Laws of Sabbath: Biblical Sources,” *Dor le Dor* 6 (1977): 41-43, 99-101, 153-55, 204-6; G. Robinson, “The Idea of Rest in the OT and the Search for the Basic Character of Sabbath,” *ZAW* 92 (1980): 32-42; M. Tsevat, “The Basic Meaning of the Biblical Sabbath,” *ZAW* 84 (1972): 447-59; M. T. Willshaw, “A Joyous Sign,” *ExpTim* 89 (1978): 179-80.

¹⁷ **tn** Or “your sanctifier.”

¹⁸ **tn** This clause is all from one word, a Piel plural participle with a third, feminine suffix: מְחַלְלִים (*m^hkhalleha*, “defilers of it”). This form serves as the subject of the sentence. The word חָלַל (*khalal*) is the antonym of קָדַשׁ (*qadash*, “to be holy”). It means “common, profane,” and in the Piel stem “make common, profane” or “defile.” Treating the Sabbath like an ordinary day would profane it, make it common.

¹⁹ **tn** This is the asseverative use of כִּי (*ki*) meaning “surely, indeed,” for it restates the point just made (see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 73, §449).

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “the one who does.”

²¹ **tn** “any” has been supplied.

person will be cut off from among his⁴ people. **31:15** Six days² work may be done,³ but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of complete rest,⁴ holy to the LORD; anyone who does work on the Sabbath day must surely be put to death. **31:16** The Israelites must keep the Sabbath by observing the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. **31:17** It is a sign between me and the Israelites forever; for in six days⁵ the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”⁶

31:18 He gave Moses two tablets of testimony when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, tablets of stone written by the finger of God.⁷

The Sin of the Golden Calf

32:1⁸ When the people saw that Moses delayed⁹ in coming down¹⁰ from the mountain, they¹¹ gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Get up,¹² make us gods¹³ that will go before us. As for this fellow Moses¹⁴ the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what¹⁵ has become of him!”

32:2 So Aaron said to them, “Break off the gold earrings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.”¹⁶

8 sn This narrative is an unhappy interlude in the flow of the argument of the book. After the giving of the Law and the instructions for the tabernacle, the people get into idolatry. So this section tells what the people were doing when Moses was on the mountain. Here is an instant violation of the covenant that they had just agreed to uphold. But through it all Moses shines as the great intercessor for the people. So the subject matter is the sin of idolatry, its effects and its remedy. Because of the similarities to Jeroboam’s setting up the calves in Dan and Bethel, modern critics have often said this passage was written at that time. U. Cassuto shows how the language of this chapter would not fit an Iron Age setting in Dan. Rather, he argues, this story was well enough known for Jeroboam to imitate the practice (*Exodus*, 407-10). This chapter can be divided into four parts for an easier exposition: idolatry (32:1-6), intercession (32:7-14), judgment (32:15-29), intercession again (32:30-33:6). Of course, these sections are far more complex than this, but this gives an overview. Four summary statements for expository points might be: I. Impatience often leads to foolish violations of the faith, II. Violations of the covenant require intercession to escape condemnation, III. Those spared of divine wrath must purge evil from their midst, and IV. Those who purge evil from their midst will find reinstatement through intercession. Several important studies are available for this. See, among others, D. R. Davis, “Rebellion, Presence, and Covenant: A Study in Exodus 32-34,” *WTJ* 44 (1982): 71-87; M. Greenberg, “Moses’ Intercessory Prayer,” *Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Studies* (1978): 21-35; R. A. Hamer, “The New Covenant of Moses,” *Judaism* 27 (1978): 345-50; R. L. Honeycutt, Jr., “Aaron, the Priesthood, and the Golden Calf,” *Rev-Exp* 74 (1977): 523-35; J. N. Oswalt, “The Golden Calves and the Egyptian Concept of Deity,” *EvQ* 45 (1973): 13-20.

9 tn The meaning of this verb is properly “caused shame,” meaning cause disappointment because he was not coming back (see also Judg 5:28 for the delay of Sisera’s chariots [S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 349]).

10 tn The infinitive construct with the *lamed* (ל) preposition is used here epexegetically, explaining the delay of Moses.

11 tn *Heb* “the people.”

12 tn The imperative means “arise.” It could be serving here as an interjection, getting Aaron’s attention. But it might also have the force of prompting him to get busy.

13 tn The plural translation is required here (although the form itself could be singular in meaning) because the verb that follows in the relative clause is a plural verb – that they go before us).

14 tn The text has “this Moses.” But this instance may find the demonstrative used in an earlier deictic sense, especially since there is no article with it.

15 tn The interrogative is used in an indirect question (see GKC 443-44 §137.c).

16 sn B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 937-38) argues that Aaron simply did not have the resolution that Moses did, and wanting to keep peace he gave in to the crowd. He also tries to explain that Aaron was wanting to show their folly through the deed. U. Cassuto also says that Aaron’s request for the gold was a form of procrastination, but that the people quickly did it and so he had no alternative but to go through with it (*Exodus*, 412). These may be right, since Aaron fully understood what was wrong with this, and what the program was all about. The text gives no strong indication to support these ideas,

1 tn Literally “her” (a feminine pronoun agreeing with “soul/life,” which is grammatically feminine).

2 tn This is an adverbial accusative of time, indicating that work may be done for six days out of the week.

3 tn The form is a Niphal imperfect; it has the nuance of permission in this sentence, for the sentence is simply saying that the six days are work days – that is when work may be done.

4 tn The expression is שבת שבתון (*shabbat shabbaton*), “a Sabbath of entire rest,” or better, “a sabbath of complete desisting” (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 404). The second noun, the modifying genitive, is an abstract noun. The repetition provides the superlative idea that complete rest is the order of the day.

5 tn The expression again forms an adverbial accusative of time.

6 sn The word “rest” essentially means “to cease, stop.” So describing God as “resting” on the seventh day does not indicate that he was tired – he simply finished creation and then ceased or stopped. But in this verse is a very bold anthropomorphism in the form of the verb וינַפֵּשׁ (*vayyinnafash*), a Niphal preterite from the root נָפַשׁ (*nafash*), the word that is related to “life, soul” or more specifically “breath, throat.” The verb is usually translated here as “he was refreshed,” offering a very human picture. It could also be rendered “he took breath” (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 345). Elsewhere the verb is used of people and animals. The anthropomorphism is clearly intended to teach people to stop and refresh themselves physically, spiritually, and emotionally on this day of rest.

7 sn The expression “the finger of God” has come up before in the book, in the plagues (Exod 8:15) to express that it was a demonstration of the power and authority of God. So here too the commandments given to Moses on stone tablets came from God. It too is a bold anthropomorphism; to attribute such a material action to Yahweh would have been thought provoking to say the least. But by using “God” and by stating it in an obviously figurative way, balance is maintained. Since no one writes with one finger, the expression simply says that the Law came directly from God.

32:3 So all¹ the people broke off the gold earrings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron. 32:4 He accepted the gold² from them,³ fashioned⁴ it with an engraving tool, and made a molten calf.⁵ Then they said, “These are your gods,⁶ O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.”

32:5 When⁷ Aaron saw this,⁸ he built an altar before it,⁹ and Aaron made a proclamation¹⁰ and said, “Tomorrow will be a feast¹¹ to the LORD.” 32:6 So they got up early on the next day and offered up burnt offerings and brought peace offerings, and the people sat down to eat and drink,¹² and they rose up to play.¹³

but there are enough hints from the way Aaron does things to warrant such a conclusion.

1 tn This “all” is a natural hyperbole in the narrative, for it means the large majority of the people.

2 tn Here “the gold” has been supplied.

3 tn Heb “from their hand.”

4 tn The verb looks similar to יָצַר (*yatsar*), “to form, fashion” by a plan or a design. That is the verb used in Gen 2:7 for Yahweh God forming the man from the dust of the ground. If it is here, it is the reverse, a human – the dust of the ground – trying to form a god or gods. The active participle of this verb in Hebrew is “the potter.” A related noun is the word יָצָר (*yetsar*), “evil inclination,” the wicked designs or intent of the human heart (Gen 6:5). But see the discussion by B. S. Childs (*Exodus* [OTL], 555-56) on a different reading, one that links the root to a hollow verb meaning “to cast out of metal” (as in 1 Kgs 7:15).

5 sn The word means a “young bull” and need not be translated as “calf” (although “calf” has become the traditional rendering in English). The word could describe an animal three years old. Aaron probably made an inner structure of wood and then, after melting down the gold, plated it. The verb “molten” does not need to imply that the image was solid gold; the word is used in Isa 30:22 for gold plating. So it was a young bull calf that was overlaid with gold, and the gold was fashioned with the stylus.

6 tn The word could be singular here and earlier; here it would then be “this is your god, O Israel.” However, the use of “these” indicates more than one god was meant by the image. But their statement and their statue, although they do not use the holy name, violate the first two commandments.

7 tn The preterite with the *vav* (ו) consecutive is subordinated as a temporal clause to the next preterite.

8 tn The word “this” has been supplied.

9 tn “Before it” means before the deity in the form of the calf. Aaron tried to redirect their worship to Yahweh, but the people had already broken down the barrier and were beyond control (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 413).

10 tn Heb “called.”

11 sn The word is חַג (*khag*), the pilgrim’s festival. This was the word used by Moses for their pilgrimage into the wilderness. Aaron seems here to be trying to do what Moses had intended they do, make a feast to Yahweh at Sinai, but his efforts will not compete with the idol. As B. Jacob says, Aaron saw all this happening and tried to rescue the true belief (*Exodus*, 941).

12 tn The second infinitive is an infinitive absolute. The first is an infinitive construct with a *lamed* (ל) preposition, expressing the purpose of their sitting down. The infinitive absolute that follows cannot take the preposition, but with the conjunction follows the force of the form before it (see GKC 340 §113.e).

13 tn The form is יָצְאוּ (ʾ*tsakheq*), a Piel infinitive construct, giving the purpose of their rising up after the festal meal. On the surface it would seem that with the festival there would be singing and dancing, so that the people were celebrating even though they did not know the reason. W. C. Kaiser says the word means “drunken immoral orgies and sexual play” (*Exodus*, EBC 2:478). That is quite an assumption for this word, but is reflected in some recent English versions (e.g.,

32:7 The LORD spoke to Moses: “Go quickly, descend,¹⁴ because your¹⁵ people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have acted corruptly. 32:8 They have quickly turned aside¹⁶ from the way that I commanded them – they have made for themselves a molten calf and have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt.’”

32:9 Then the LORD said to Moses: “I have seen this people.¹⁷ Look¹⁸ what a stiff-necked people they are!¹⁹ 32:10 So now, leave me alone²⁰ so that my anger can burn against them

NCV “got up and sinned sexually”; TEV “an orgy of drinking and sex”). The word means “to play, trifle.” It can have other meanings, depending on its contexts. It is used of Lot when he warned his sons-in-law and appeared as one who “mocked” them; it is also used of Ishmael “playing” with Isaac, which Paul interprets as mocking; it is used of Isaac “playing” with his wife in a manner that revealed to Abimelech that they were not brother and sister, and it is used by Potiphar’s wife to say that her husband brought this slave Joseph in to “mock” them. The most that can be gathered from these is that it is playful teasing, serious mocking, or playful caresses. It might fit with wild orgies, but there is no indication of that in this passage, and the word does not mean it. The fact that they were festive and playing before an idol was sufficient.

14 tn The two imperatives could also express one idea: “get down there.” In other words, “Make haste to get down.”

15 sn By giving the people to Moses in this way, God is saying that they have no longer any right to claim him as their God, since they have shared his honor with another. This is God’s talionic response to their “These are your gods who brought you up.” The use of these pronoun changes also would form an appeal to Moses to respond, since Moses knew that God had brought them up from Egypt.

16 tn The verb is a perfect tense, reflecting the present perfect nuance: “they have turned aside” and are still disobedient. But the verb is modified with the adverb “quickly” (actually a Piel infinitive absolute). It has been only a matter of weeks since they heard the voice of God prohibiting this.

17 sn This is a bold anthropomorphism; it is as if God has now had a chance to get to know these people and has discovered how rebellious they are. The point of the figure is that there has been discernible evidence of their nature.

18 tn Heb “and behold” or “and look.” The expression directs attention in order to persuade the hearer.

19 sn B. Jacob says the image is that of the people walking before God, and when he called to them the directions, they would not bend their neck to listen; they were resolute in doing what they intended to do (*Exodus*, 943). The figure describes them as refusing to submit, but resisting in pride.

20 tn The imperative, from the word “to rest” (נָח, *nuakh*), has the sense of “leave me alone, let me be.” It is a directive for Moses not to intercede for the people. B. S. Childs (*Exodus* [OTL], 567) reflects the Jewish interpretation that there is a profound paradox in God’s words. He vows the severest punishment but then suddenly conditions it on Moses’ agreement. “Let me alone that I may consume them” is the statement, but the effect is that he has left the door open for intercession. He allows himself to be persuaded – that is what a mediator is for. God could have slammed the door (as when Moses wanted to go into the promised land). Moreover, by alluding to the promise to Abraham God gave Moses the strongest reason to intercede.

and I can destroy them, and I will make from you a great nation.”

32:11 But Moses sought the favor⁴ of the LORD his God and said, “O LORD, why does your anger burn against your people, whom you have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? **32:12** Why² should the Egyptians say,³ ‘For evil⁴ he led them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy⁵ them from the face of the earth?’ Turn from your burning anger, and relent⁶ of this evil against your people. **32:13** Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel your servants, to whom you swore by yourself and told them, ‘I will multiply your descendants⁷ like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken about⁸ I will give to your descendants,⁹ and they will inherit it forever.’” **32:14** Then the LORD relented over the evil that he had said he would do to his people.

32:15 Moses turned and went down from the mountain with¹⁰ the two tablets of the testimony in his hands. The tablets were written on both sides – they were written on the front and on the

back. **32:16** Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. **32:17** When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted,¹¹ he said to Moses, “It is the sound of war in the camp!” **32:18** Moses¹² said, “It is not the sound of those who shout for victory,¹³ nor is it the sound of those who cry because they are overcome,¹⁴ but the sound of singing¹⁵ I hear.”¹⁶

32:19 When he approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses became extremely angry.¹⁷ He threw the tablets from his hands and broke them to pieces at the bottom of the mountain.¹⁸ **32:20** He took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire, ground it¹⁹ to powder, poured it out on the water, and made the Israelites drink it.²⁰

32:21 Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you, that you have brought on them so great a sin?” **32:22** Aaron said, “Do not let your anger burn hot, my lord;²¹ you know these people, that they tend to evil.²² **32:23** They said to me, ‘Make us gods that will go before us, for as for this fellow Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him.’ **32:24** So I said to them, ‘Whoever has gold, break it off.’ So they gave it²³ to me, and I threw it into the fire, and this calf came out.”²⁴

32:25 Moses saw that the people were running wild,²⁵ for Aaron had let them get com-

¹ tn S. R. Driver (*Exodus*, 351) draws on Arabic to show that the meaning of this verb (כָּלַח, *khalah*) was properly “make sweet the face” or “stroke the face”; so here “to entreat, seek to conciliate.” In this prayer, Driver adds, Moses urges four motives for mercy: 1) Israel is Yahweh’s people, 2) Israel’s deliverance has demanded great power, 3) the Egyptians would mock if the people now perished, and 4) the oath God made to the fathers.

² tn The question is rhetorical; it really forms an affirmation that is used here as a reason for the request (see GKC 474 §150.e).

³ tn Heb “speak, saying.” This is redundant in English and has been simplified in the translation.

⁴ tn The word “evil” means any kind of life-threatening or fatal calamity. “Evil” is that which hinders life, interrupts life, causes pain to life, or destroys it. The Egyptians would conclude that such a God would have no good intent in taking his people to the desert if now he destroyed them.

⁵ tn The form is a Piel infinitive construct from כָּלַח (*kalah*, “to complete, finish”) but in this stem, “bring to an end, destroy.” As a purpose infinitive this expresses what the Egyptians would have thought of God’s motive.

⁶ tn The verb “repent, relent” when used of God is certainly an anthropomorphism. It expresses the deep pain that one would have over a situation. Earlier God repented that he had made humans (Gen 6:6). Here Moses is asking God to repent/relent over the judgment he was about to bring, meaning that he should be moved by such compassion that there would be no judgment like that. J. P. Hyatt observes that the Bible uses so many anthropomorphisms because the Israelites conceived of God as a dynamic and living person in a vital relationship with people, responding to their needs and attitudes and actions (*Exodus* [NCBC], 307). See H. V. D. Parunak, “A Semantic Survey of *NHM*,” *Bib* 56 (1975): 512-32.

⁷ tn Heb “your seed.”

⁸ tn “about” has been supplied.

⁹ tn Heb “seed.”

¹⁰ tn The disjunctive *vav* (ו) serves here as a circumstantial clause indicator.

¹¹ sn See F. C. Fensham, “New Light from Ugaritica V on Ex, 32:17 (*br’h*),” *JNSL* 2 (1972): 86-7.

¹² tn Heb “he”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹³ tn Heb “the sound of the answering of might,” meaning it is not the sound of shouting in victory (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 418).

¹⁴ tn Heb “the sound of the answering of weakness,” meaning the cry of the defeated (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 415).

¹⁵ tn Heb “answering in song” (a play on the twofold meaning of the word).

¹⁶ sn See A. Newman, “Compositional Analysis and Functional Ambiguity Equivalence: Translating Exodus 32, 17-18,” *Babel* 21 (1975): 29-35.

¹⁷ tn Heb “and the anger of Moses burned hot.”

¹⁸ sn See N. M. Waldham, “The Breaking of the Tablets,” *Judaism* 27 (1978): 442-47.

¹⁹ tn Here “it” has been supplied.

²⁰ tn Here “it” has been supplied.

²¹ sn Pouring the ashes into the water running from the mountain in the brook (Deut 9:21) and making them drink it was a type of the bitter water test that tested the wife suspected of unfaithfulness. Here the reaction of the people who drank would indicate guilt or not (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 419).

²² sn “My lord” refers to Moses.

²³ tn Heb “that on evil it is.”

²⁴ tn Here “it” has been supplied.

²⁵ sn Aaron first tried to blame the people, and then he tried to make it sound like a miracle – was it to sound like one of the plagues where out of the furnace came life? This text does not mention it, but Deut 9:20 tells how angry God was with Aaron. Only intercession saved his life.

²⁶ tn The word is difficult to interpret. There does not seem to be enough evidence to justify the KJV’s translation “naked.” It appears to mean something like “let loose” or “lack restraint” (Prov 29:18). The idea seems to be that the people had broken loose, were undisciplined, and were completely given over to their desires.

pletely out of control, causing derision from their enemies.¹ **32:26** So Moses stood at the entrance of the camp and said, “Whoever is for the LORD, come² to me.”³ All the Levites gathered around him, **32:27** and he said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Each man fasten⁴ his sword on his side, and go back and forth⁵ from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and each one kill his brother, his friend, and his neighbor.’”⁶

32:28 The Levites did what Moses ordered,⁷ and that day about three thousand men of the people died.⁸ **32:29** Moses said, “You have been consecrated⁹ today for the LORD, for each of you was against his son or against his brother, so he has given a blessing to you today.”¹⁰

32:30 The next day Moses said to the people,¹¹ “You have committed a very serious sin,¹² but now I will go up to the LORD – perhaps I can make atonement¹³ on behalf of your sin.”

32:31 So Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Alas, this people has committed a very

serious sin,¹⁴ and they have made for themselves gods of gold. **32:32** But now, if you will forgive their sin. . . ,¹⁵ but if not, wipe me out¹⁶ from your book that you have written.”¹⁷ **32:33** The LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me – that person I will wipe out of my book. **32:34** So now go, lead the people to the place I have spoken to you about. See,¹⁸ my angel will go before you. But on the day that I punish, I will indeed punish them for their sin.”¹⁹

32:35 And the LORD sent a plague on the people because they had made the calf²⁰ – the one Aaron made.²¹

33:1 The LORD said to Moses, “Go up²² from here, you and the people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land I promised on oath²³ to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’”²⁴

33:2 I will send an angel²⁵ before you, and I will

¹⁴ tn As before, the cognate accusative is used; it would literally be “this people has sinned a great sin.”

¹⁵ tn The apodosis is not expressed; it would be understood as “good.” It is not stated because of the intensity of the expression (the figure is aposiopesis, a sudden silence). It is also possible to take this first clause as a desire and not a conditional clause, rendering it “Oh that you would forgive!”

¹⁶ tn The word “wipe” is a figure of speech indicating “remove me” (meaning he wants to die). The translation “blot” is traditional, but not very satisfactory, since it does not convey complete removal.

¹⁷ sn The book that is referred to here should not be interpreted as the NT “book of life” which is portrayed (figuratively) as a register of all the names of the saints who are redeemed and will inherit eternal life. Here it refers to the names of those who are living and serving in this life, whose names, it was imagined, were on the roster in the heavenly courts as belonging to the chosen. Moses would rather die than live if these people are not forgiven (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 356).

¹⁸ tn Heb “behold, look.” Moses should take this fact into consideration.

¹⁹ sn The Law said that God would not clear the guilty. But here the punishment is postponed to some future date when he would revisit this matter. Others have taken the line to mean that whenever a reckoning was considered necessary, then this sin would be included (see B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 957). The repetition of the verb traditionally rendered “visit” in both clauses puts emphasis on the certainty – so “indeed.”

²⁰ tn The verse is difficult because of the double reference to the making of the calf. The NJPS’s translation tries to reconcile the two by reading “for what they did with the calf that Aaron had made.” B. S. Childs (*Exodus* [OTL], 557) explains in some detail why this is not a good translation based on syntactical grounds; he opts for the conclusion that the last three words are a clumsy secondary addition. It seems preferable to take the view that both are true, Aaron is singled out for his obvious lead in the sin, but the people sinned by instigating the whole thing.

²¹ sn Most commentators have difficulty with this verse. W. C. Kaiser says the strict chronology is not always kept, and so the plague here may very well refer to the killing of the three thousand (“*Exodus*,” *IBC* 2:481).

²² tn The two imperatives underscore the immediacy of the demand: “go, go up,” meaning “get going up” or “be on your way.”

²³ tn Or “the land which I swore.”

²⁴ tn Heb “seed.”

²⁵ sn This seems not to be the same as the Angel of the Presence introduced before.

¹ tn The last two words of the verse read literally “for a whispering among those who rose up against them.” The foes would have mocked and derided them when they heard that they had abandoned the God who had led them out of Egypt (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 354).

² tn “come” is not in the text, but has been supplied.

³ tn S. R. Driver suggests that the command was tersely put: “Who is for Yahweh? To me!” (*Exodus*, 354).

⁴ tn Heb “put.”

⁵ tn The two imperatives form a verbal hendiadys: “pass over and return,” meaning, “go back and forth” throughout the camp.

⁶ tn The phrases have “and kill a man his brother, and a man his companion, and a man his neighbor.” The instructions were probably intended to mean that they should kill leaders they knew to be guilty because they had been seen or because they failed the water test – whoever they were.

⁷ tn Heb “did according to the word of Moses.”

⁸ tn Heb “fell.”

⁹ tn Heb “Your hand was filled.” The phrase “fill your hands” is a familiar expression having to do with commissioning and devotion to a task that is earlier used in 28:41; 29:9, 29, 33, 35. This has usually been explained as a Qal imperative. S. R. Driver explains it “Fill your hand today,” meaning, take a sacrifice to God and be installed in the priesthood (*Exodus*, 355). But it probably is a Piel perfect, meaning “they have filled your hands today,” or, “your hand was filled today.” This was an expression meant to say that they had been faithful to God even though it turned them against family and friends – but God would give them a blessing.

¹⁰ tn The text simply has “and to give on you today a blessing.” Gesenius notes that the infinitive construct seems to be attached with a *vav* (ו; like the infinitive absolute) as the continuation of a previous finite verb. He reads the verb “fill” as an imperative: “fill your hand today...and that to bring a blessing on you, i.e., that you may be blessed” (see GKC 351 §114. p). If the preceding verb is taken as perfect tense, however, then this would also be perfect – “he has blessed you today.”

¹¹ tn Heb “and it was on the morrow and Moses said to the people.”

¹² tn The text uses a cognate accusative: “you have sinned a great sin.”

¹³ tn The form אֶכַּפֶּרֶה (*akhapp^erah*) is a Piel cohortative/imperfect. Here with only a possibility of being successful, a potential imperfect nuance works best.

drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.¹ **33:3** Go up² to a land flowing with milk and honey. But³ I will not go up among you, for you are a stiff-necked people, and I might destroy you⁴ on the way.⁵

33:4 When the people heard this troubling word⁵ they mourned,⁶ no one put on his ornaments. **33:5** For⁷ the LORD had said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I went up among you for a moment,⁸ I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments,⁹ that I may know¹⁰ what I should do to you.’”¹¹ **33:6** So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments by Mount Horeb.

The Presence of the Lord

33:7¹² Moses took¹³ the tent¹⁴ and pitched it

outside the camp, at a good distance¹⁵ from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. Any-one¹⁶ seeking¹⁷ the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting that was outside the camp.

33:8 And when Moses went out¹⁸ to the tent, all the people would get up¹⁹ and stand at the entrance to their tents²⁰ and watch²¹ Moses until he entered the tent. **33:9** And²² whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD²⁴ would speak with Moses.²⁵ **33:10** When all the people would see the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people, each one at the entrance of his own tent, would rise and worship.²⁶ **33:11** The LORD

¹ **sn** See T. Ishida, “The Structure and Historical Implications of Lists of Pre-Israelite Nations,” *Bib* (1979): 461-90.

² **tn** This verse seems to be a continuation of the command to “go up” since it begins with “to a land....” The intervening clauses are therefore parenthetical or relative. But the translation is made simpler by supplying the verb.

³ **tn** This is a strong adverbial here, “but.”

⁴ **tn** The clause is “lest I consume you.” It would go with the decision not to accompany them: “I will not go up with you... lest I consume (destroy) you in the way.” The verse is saying that because of the people’s bent to rebellion, Yahweh would not remain in their midst as he had formerly said he would do. Their lives would be at risk if he did.

⁵ **tn** Or “bad news” (NAB, NCV).

⁶ **sn** The people would rather have risked divine discipline than to go without Yahweh in their midst. So they mourned, and they took off the ornaments. Such had been used in making the golden calf, and so because of their association with all of that they were to be removed as a sign of remorse.

⁷ **tn** The verse simply begins “And Yahweh said.” But it is clearly meant to be explanatory for the preceding action of the people.

⁸ **tn** The construction is formed with a simple imperfect in the first half and a perfect tense with *vav* (ו) in the second half. *Heb* “[In] one moment I will go up in your midst and I will destroy you.” The verse is certainly not intended to say that God was about to destroy them. That, plus the fact that he has announced he will not go in their midst, leads most commentators to take this as a conditional clause: “If I were to do such and such, then....”

⁹ **tn** The Hebrew text also has “from on you.”

¹⁰ **tn** The form is the cohortative with a *vav* (ו) following the imperative; it therefore expresses the purpose or result: “strip off...that I may know.” The call to remove the ornaments must have been perceived as a call to show true repentance for what had happened. If they repented, then God would know how to deal with them.

¹¹ **tn** This last clause begins with the interrogative “what,” but it is used here as an indirect interrogative. It introduces a noun clause, the object of the verb “know.”

¹² **sn** This unit of the book could actually include all of chap. 33, starting with the point of the LORD’s withdrawal from the people. If that section is not part of the exposition, it would have to be explained as the background. The point is that sinfulness prevents the active presence of the LORD leading his people. But then the rest of chap. 33 forms the development. In vv. 7-11 there is the gracious provision: the LORD reveals through his faithful mediator. The LORD was leading his people, but now more remotely because of their sin. Then, in vv. 12-17, Moses intercedes for the people, and the intercession of the mediator guarantees the LORD’s presence. The point of all of this is that God wanted the people to come to know that if he was not with them they should not go. Finally, the presence of the LORD is verified to the mediator by a special revelation

(18-23). The point of the whole chapter is that by his grace the LORD renews the promise of his presence by special revelation

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “and Moses took.”

¹⁴ **sn** A widespread contemporary view is that this section represents a source that thought the tent of meeting was already erected (see S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 359). But the better view is that this is a temporary tent used for meeting the LORD. U. Cassuto explains this view very well (*Exodus*, 429-30), namely, that because the building of the tabernacle was now in doubt if the LORD was not going to be in their midst, another plan seemed necessary. Moses took this tent, his tent, and put some distance between the camp and it. Here he would use the tent as the place to meet God, calling it by the same name since it was a surrogate tent. Thus, the entire section was a temporary means of meeting God, until the current wrath was past.

¹⁵ **tn** The infinitive absolute is used here as an adverb (see GKC 341 §113.h).

¹⁶ **tn** The clause begins with “and it was,” the perfect tense with the *vav* conjunction. The imperfect tenses in this section are customary, describing what used to happen (others describe the verbs as frequentative). See GKC 315 §107.e.

¹⁷ **tn** The form is the Piel participle. The seeking here would indicate seeking an oracle from Yahweh or seeking to find a resolution for some difficulty (as in 2 Sam 21:1) or even perhaps coming with a sacrifice. B. Jacob notes that the tent was even here a place of prayer, for the benefit of the people (*Exodus*, 961). It is not known how long this location was used.

¹⁸ **tn** The clause is introduced again with “and it was.” The perfect tense here with the *vav* (ו) is used to continue the sequence of actions that were done repeatedly in the past (see GKC 331-32 §112.e). The temporal clause is then formed with the infinitive construct of נָסַח (*yatsa*’), with “Moses” as the subjective genitive: “and it was according to the going out of Moses.”

¹⁹ **tn** Or “rise up.”

²⁰ **tn** The subject of this verb is specified with the individualizing use of “man”: “and all Israel would station themselves, each person (man) at the entrance to his tent.”

²¹ **tn** The perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) continues the sequence of the customary imperfect. The people “would gaze” (after) Moses until he entered the tent.

²² **tn** This is a temporal clause using an infinitive construct with a suffixed subject.

²³ **tn** *Heb* “and it was when.”

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and he”; the referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁵ **tn** Both verbs, “stand” and “speak,” are perfect tenses with *vav* (ו) consecutive.

²⁶ **tn** All the main verbs in this verse are perfect tenses continuing the customary sequence (see GKC 337 §112.kk). The idea is that the people would get up (rise) when the cloud was there and then worship, meaning in part bow down. When the cloud was not there, there was access to seek God.

would speak to Moses face to face,¹ the way a person speaks² to a friend. Then Moses³ would return to the camp, but his servant, Joshua son of Nun, a young man, did not leave the tent.⁴

33:12 Moses said to the LORD, “See, you have been saying to me, ‘Bring this people up,’⁵ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. But you said, ‘I know you by name,⁶ and also you have found favor in my sight.’ **33:13** Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me⁷ your way, that I may know you,⁸ that I may continue to find⁹ favor in your sight. And see¹⁰ that this nation is your people.”

33:14 And the LORD¹¹ said, “My presence¹² will go with you,¹³ and I will give you rest.”¹⁴

33:15 And Moses¹⁵ said to him, “If your presence does not go¹⁶ with us,¹⁷ do not take us up from here.¹⁸ **33:16** For how will it be known then that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not by your going with us, so that we will be distinguished, I and your people, from all the people who are on the face of the earth?”¹⁹

33:17 The LORD said to Moses, “I will do this thing also that you have requested, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know²⁰ you by name.”

33:18 And Moses²¹ said, “Show me your glory.”²²

33:19 And the LORD²³ said, “I will make all my goodness²⁴ pass before your face, and I will proclaim the LORD by name²⁵ before you; I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy.”²⁶

1 tn “Face to face” is circumstantial to the action of the verb, explaining how they spoke (see GKC 489-90 §156.c). The point of this note of friendly relationship with Moses is that Moses was “at home” in this tent speaking with God. Moses would derive courage from this when he interceded for the people (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 966).

2 tn The verb in this clause is a progressive imperfect.

3 tn *Heb* “he”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

4 sn Moses did not live in the tent. But Joshua remained there most of the time to guard the tent, it seems, lest any of the people approach it out of curiosity.

5 tn The Hiphil imperative is from the same verb that has been used before for bringing the people up from Egypt and leading them to Canaan.

6 tn That is, “chosen you.”

7 tn The prayer uses the Hiphil imperative of the verb “to know.” “Cause me to know” is “show me, reveal to me, teach or inform me.” Moses wanted to know more of God’s dealings with people, especially after all that has happened in the preceding chapter.

8 tn The imperfect tense of the verb “to know” with the *vav* follows the imperative of this root, and so this indicates the purpose clause (final imperfect): “in order that I may know you.” S. R. Driver summarizes it this way: that I may understand what your nature and character is, and shape my petitions accordingly, so that I may find grace in your sight, and my future prayers may be answered (*Exodus*, 361).

9 tn The purpose clause simply uses the imperfect, “that I may find.” But since he already has found favor in God’s eyes, he is clearly praying that it be so in the future as well as now.

10 tn The verb “see” (an imperative) is a request for God to acknowledge Israel as his people by providing the divine leadership needed. So his main appeal will be for the people and not himself. To underscore this, he repeats “see” the way the section opened.

11 tn *Heb* “and he said”; the referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

12 sn *Heb* “my face.” This represents the presence of Yahweh going with the people (see 2 Sam 17:11 for an illustration). The “presence” probably refers to the angel of the presence or some similar manifestation of God’s leading and caring for his people.

13 tn The phrase “with you” is not in the Hebrew text, but is implied.

14 sn The expression certainly refers to the peace of mind and security of knowing that God was with them. But the expression came to mean “settle them in the land of promise” and give them rest and peace from their enemies. U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 434) observes how in 32:10 God had told Moses, “Leave me alone” (“give me rest”), but now he promises to give them rest. The parallelism underscores the great transition through intercession.

15 tn *Heb* “and he said”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

16 tn The construction uses the active participle to stress the continual going of the presence: if there is not your face going.

17 tn “with us” has been supplied.

18 tn *Heb* “from this.”

19 sn See W. Brueggemann, “The Crisis and Promise of Presence in Israel,” *HBT* 1 (1979): 47-86; and N. M. Waldman, “God’s Ways – A Comparative Note,” *JQR* 70 (1979): 67-70.

20 tn The verb in this place is a preterite with the *vav* (v) consecutive, judging from the pointing. It then follows in sequence the verb “you have found favor,” meaning you stand in that favor, and so it means “I have known you” and still do (equal to the present perfect). The emphasis, however, is on the results of the action, and so “I know you.”

21 tn *Heb* “and he said”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

22 sn Moses now wanted to see the glory of Yahweh, more than what he had already seen and experienced. He wanted to see God in all his majesty. The LXX chose to translate this without a word for “glory” or “honor”; instead they used the pronoun *seautou*, “yourself” – show me the real You. God tells him that he cannot see it fully, but in part. It will be enough for Moses to disclose to him the reality of the divine presence as well as God’s moral nature. It would be impossible for Moses to comprehend all of the nature of God, for there is a boundary between God and man. But God would let him see his goodness, the sum of his nature, pass by in a flash. B. Jacob (*Exodus*, 972) says that the glory refers to God’s majesty, might, and glory, as manifested in nature, in his providence, his laws, and his judgments. He adds that this glory should and would be made visible to man – that was its purpose in the world.

23 tn *Heb* “and he said”; the referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

24 sn The word “goodness” refers to the divine appearance in summary fashion.

25 tn The expression “make proclamation in the name of Yahweh” (here a perfect tense with *vav* [v] consecutive for future) means to declare, reveal, or otherwise make proclamation of who Yahweh is. The “name of Yahweh” (rendered “the name of the LORD” throughout) refers to his divine attributes revealed to his people, either in word or deed. What will be focused on first will be his grace and compassion.

26 sn God declares his mercy and grace in similar terms to his earlier self-revelation (“I am that I am”): “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.” In other words, the grace and mercy of God are bound up in his own will. Obviously, in this passage the recipients of that favor are the penitent Israelites who were forgiven through Moses’ intercession. The two words are at the heart of God’s dealings with people. The

33:20 But he added, “You cannot see my face, for no one can¹ see me and live.”² 33:21 The LORD said, “Here³ is a place by me; you will station yourself⁴ on a rock. 33:22 When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and will cover⁵ you with my hand⁶ while I pass by.⁷ 33:23 Then I will take away my hand, and you will see my back,⁸ but my face must not be seen.”⁹

The New Tablets of the Covenant

34:1¹⁰ The LORD said to Moses, “Cut out¹¹ two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write¹² on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you smashed. 34:2 Be prepared¹³ in the morning, and go up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and station yourself¹⁴ for me there on the top of the mountain. 34:3 No one is to come up with you; do not let anyone be seen anywhere on the mountain; not even the flocks or the herds may graze in front of that mountain.” 34:4 So Moses¹⁵ cut out two tablets of stone like the first;¹⁶ early in the morning he went up¹⁷ to Mount Sinai, just as the LORD had commanded him, and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone.

first is *khanan* (קָחַן, “to be gracious, show favor”). It means to grant favor or grace to someone, grace meaning unmerited favor. All of God’s dealings are gracious, but especially in forgiving sins and granting salvation it is critical. Parallel to this is *rakham* (רָחַם), a word that means “show compassion, tender mercy.” It is a word that is related to the noun “womb,” the connection being in providing care and protection for that which is helpless and dependent – a motherly quality. In both of these constructions the verbs simply express what God will do, without explaining why. See further, J. R. Lundbom, “God’s Use of the *Idem per idem* to Terminate Debate,” *HTR* 71 (1978): 193-201; and J. Piper, “Prolegomena to Understanding Romans 9:14-15: An Interpretation of Exodus 33:19,” *JETS* 22 (1979): 203-16.

¹ **tn** In view of the use of the verb “can, be able to” in the first clause, this imperfect tense is given a potential nuance.

² **tn** Gesenius notes that sometimes a negative statement takes the place of a conditional clause; here it is equal to “if a man sees me he does not live” (GKC 498 §159.gg). The other passages that teach this are Gen 32:30; Deut 4:33, 5:24, 26; Judg 6:22, 13:22, and Isa 6:5.

³ **tn** The deictic particle is used here simply to call attention to a place of God’s knowing and choosing.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and you will,” or interpretively, “where you will.”

⁵ **sn** Note the use in Exod 40:3, “and you will screen the ark with the curtain.” The glory is covered, veiled from being seen.

⁶ **tn** The circumstantial clause is simply, “my hand [being] over you.” This protecting hand of Yahweh represents a fairly common theme in the Bible.

⁷ **tn** The construction has a preposition with an infinitive construct and a suffix: “while [or until] I pass by” (*Heb* “in the passing by of me”).

⁸ **tn** The plural “my backs” is according to Gesenius an extension plural (compare “face,” a dual in Hebrew). The word denotes a locality in general, but that is composed of numerous parts (see GKC 397 §124.b). W. C. Kaiser says that since God is a spirit, the meaning of this word could just as easily be rendered “after effects” of his presence (“Exodus,” *EBC* 2:484). As S. R. Driver says, though, while this may indicate just the “afterglow” that he leaves behind him, it was enough to suggest what the full brilliancy of his presence must be (*Exodus*, 363; see also Job 26:14).

⁹ **tn** The Niphal imperfect could simply be rendered “will not be seen,” but given the emphasis of the preceding verses, it is more binding than that, and so a negated obligatory imperfect fits better: “it must not be seen.” It would also be possible to render it with a potential imperfect tense: “it cannot be seen.”

¹⁰ **sn** The restoration of the faltering community continues in this chapter. First, Moses is instructed to make new tablets and take them to the mountain (1-4). Then, through the promised theophany God proclaims his moral character (5-7). Moses responds with the reiteration of the intercession (8-9), and God responds with the renewal of the covenant (10-28). To put these into expository form, as principles, the chapter would run as follows: I. God provides for spiritual renewal (1-4), II. God reminds people of his moral standard (5-9), III. God renews his covenant promises and stipulations (10-28).

¹¹ **tn** The imperative is followed by the preposition with a suffix expressing the ethical dative; it strengthens the instruction for Moses. Interestingly, the verb “cut out, chisel, hew,” is the same verb from which the word for a “graven image” is derived – פָּסַל (*pasal*).

¹² **tn** The perfect tense with *vav* consecutive makes the value of this verb equal to an imperfect tense, probably a simple future here.

sn Nothing is said of how God was going to write on these stone tablets at this point, but in the end it is Moses who wrote the words. This is not considered a contradiction, since God is often credited with things he has people do in his place. There is great symbolism in this command – if ever a command said far more than it actually said, this is it. The instruction means that the covenant had been renewed, or was going to be renewed, and that the sanctuary with the tablets in the ark at its center would be built (see Deut 10:1). The first time Moses went up he was empty-handed; when he came down he smashed the tablets because of the Israelites’ sin. Now the people would see him go up with empty tablets and be uncertain whether he would come back with the tablets inscribed again (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 977-78).

¹³ **tn** The form is a Niphal participle that means “be prepared, be ready.” This probably means that Moses was to do in preparation what the congregation had to do back in Exod 19:11-15.

¹⁴ **sn** The same word is used in Exod 33:21. It is as if Moses was to be at his post when Yahweh wanted to communicate to him.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent has been specified here and the name “Moses,” which occurs later in this verse, has been replaced with the pronoun (“he”), both for stylistic reasons.

¹⁶ **sn** Deuteronomy says that Moses was also to make an ark of acacia wood before the tablets, apparently to put the tablets in until the sanctuary was built. But this ark may not have been the ark built later; or, it might be the wood box, but Bezalel still had to do all the golden work with it.

¹⁷ **tn** The line reads “and Moses got up early in the morning and went up.” These verbs likely form a verbal hendiadys, the first one with its prepositional phrase serving in an adverbial sense.

34:5 The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the LORD by name.¹ **34:6** The LORD passed by before him and proclaimed:² “The LORD, the LORD,³ the compassionate and gracious⁴ God, slow to anger,⁵ and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness,⁶ **34:7** keeping loyal love for thousands,⁷ forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. But he by no means leaves the guilty unpunished, responding to the transgression⁸ of fathers by dealing with children and children’s children, to the third and fourth generation.”

34:8 Moses quickly bowed⁹ to the ground and worshiped **34:9** and said, “If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, let my Lord¹⁰ go among us, for we¹¹ are a stiff-necked people; pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.”

34:10 He said, “See, I am going to make¹² a covenant before all your people. I will do wonders such as have not been done¹³ in all the earth, nor in any nation. All the people among whom you live will see the work of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am doing with you.¹⁴

34:11 “Obey¹⁵ what I am commanding you this day. I am going to drive out¹⁶ before you the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite. **34:12** Be careful not to make¹⁷ a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it become a snare¹⁸ among you. **34:13** Rather you must destroy their altars, smash their images, and cut down their Asherah poles.¹⁹ **34:14** For you must not worship²⁰ any other god,²¹ for the LORD, whose name²² is Jealous, is a jealous God. **34:15** Be careful²³ not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for when²⁴ they prostitute themselves²⁵ to their gods

1 tn Some commentaries wish to make Moses the subject of the second and the third verbs, the first because he was told to stand there and this verb suggests he did it, and the last because it sounds like he was worshiping Yahweh (cf. NASB). But it is clear from v. 6 that Yahweh was the subject of the last clause of v. 5 – v. 6 tells how he did it. So if Yahweh is the subject of the first and last clauses of v. 5, it seems simpler that he also be the subject of the second. Moses took his stand there, but God stood by him (B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 981; U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 439). There is no reason to make Moses the subject in any of the verbs of v. 5.

2 tn Here is one of the clearest examples of what it means “to call on the name of the LORD,” as that clause has been translated traditionally (וַיִּקְרָא בְשֵׁם יְהוָה, *vayyiqra’ v’shem y’hvah*). It seems more likely that it means “to make proclamation of Yahweh by name.” Yahweh came down and made a proclamation – and the next verses give the content of what he said. This cannot be prayer or praise; it is a proclamation of the nature or attributes of God (which is what his “name” means throughout the Bible). Attempts to make Moses the subject of the verb are awkward, for the verb is repeated in v. 6 with Yahweh clearly doing the proclaiming.

3 sn U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 439) suggests that these two names be written as a sentence: “Yahweh, He is Yahweh.” In this manner it reflects “I am that I am.” It is impossible to define his name in any other way than to make this affirmation and then show what it means.

4 tn See Exod 33:19.

5 sn This is literally “long of anger.” His anger prolongs itself, allowing for people to repent before punishment is inflicted.

6 sn These two words (“loyal love” and “truth”) are often found together, occasionally in a hendiadys construction. If that is the interpretation here, then it means “faithful covenant love.” Even if they are left separate, they are dual elements of a single quality. The first word is God’s faithful covenant love; the second word is God’s reliability and faithfulness.

7 tn That is, “for thousands of generations.”

8 sn As in the ten commandments (20:5-6), this expression shows that the iniquity and its punishment will continue in the family if left unchecked. This does not go on as long as the outcomes for good (thousands versus third or fourth generations), and it is limited to those who hate God.

9 tn The first two verbs form a hendiadys: “he hurried...he bowed,” meaning “he quickly bowed down.”

10 tn The Hebrew term translated “Lord” two times here is אֲדֹנָי (*adonay*).

11 tn Heb “it is.” Hebrew uses the third person masculine singular pronoun here in agreement with the noun “people.”

12 tn Here again is a use of the *futur instans* participle; the deictic particle plus the pronoun precedes the participle, showing what is about to happen.

13 tn The verb here is בָּרָא (*bara’*, “to create”). The choice of this verb is to stress that these wonders would be supernaturally performed, for the verb is used only with God as the subject.

14 sn The idea is that God will be doing awesome things in dealing with them, i.e., to fulfill his program.

15 tn The covenant duties begin with this command to “keep well” what is being commanded. The Hebrew expression is “keep for you”; the preposition and the suffix form the ethical dative, adding strength to the imperative.

16 tn Again, this is the *futur instans* use of the participle.

17 tn The exact expression is “take heed to yourself lest you make.” It is the second use of this verb in the duties, now in the Niphal stem. To take heed to yourself means to watch yourself, be sure not to do something. Here, if they failed to do this, they would end up making entangling treaties.

18 sn A snare would be a trap, an allurement to ruin. See Exod 23:33.

19 tn Or “images of Asherah”; ASV, NASB “their Asherim”; NCV “their Asherah idols.”

sn *Asherah* was a leading deity of the Canaanite pantheon, wife/sister of El and goddess of fertility. She was commonly worshiped at shrines in or near groves of evergreen trees, or, failing that, at places marked by wooden poles. These were to be burned or cut down (Deut 12:3; 16:21; Judg 6:25, 28, 30; 2 Kgs 18:4).

20 tn Heb “bow down.”

21 sn In Exod 20:3 it was “gods.”

22 sn Here, too, the emphasis on God’s being a jealous God is repeated (see Exod 20:5). The use of “name” here is to stress that this is his nature, his character.

23 tn The sentence begins simply “lest you make a covenant”; it is undoubtedly a continuation of the imperative introduced earlier, and so that is supplied here.

24 tn The verb is a perfect with a *vav* consecutive. In the literal form of the sentence, this clause tells what might happen if the people made a covenant with the inhabitants of the land: “Take heed...lest you make a covenant...and then they prostitute themselves...and sacrifice...and invite...and you eat.” The sequence lays out an entire scenario.

25 tn The verb זָנָה (*zanah*) means “to play the prostitute; to commit whoredom; to be a harlot” or something similar. It is used here and elsewhere in the Bible for departing from pure religion and engaging in pagan religion. The use of the word in this figurative sense is fitting, because the relationship between God and his people is pictured as a marriage, and to be unfaithful to it was a sin. This is also why God is described as a “jealous” or “impassioned” God. The figure may not be merely a metaphorical use, but perhaps a metonymy, since

and sacrifice to their gods, and someone invites you,¹ you will eat from his sacrifice; **34:16** and you then take² his daughters for your sons, and when his daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will make your sons prostitute themselves to their gods as well. **34:17** You must not make yourselves molten gods.

34:18 “You must keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days³ you must eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you; do this⁴ at the appointed time of the month Abib, for in the month Abib you came out of Egypt.

34:19 “Every firstborn of the womb⁵ belongs to me, even every firstborn⁶ of your cattle that is a male,⁷ whether ox or sheep. **34:20** Now the firstling⁸ of a donkey you may redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, then break its neck.⁹ You must redeem all the firstborn of your sons.

“No one will appear before me empty-handed.¹⁰

34:21 “On six days¹¹ you may labor, but on the seventh day you must rest;¹² even at the time of plowing and of harvest¹³ you are to rest.¹⁴

34:22 “You must observe¹⁵ the Feast of Weeks – the firstfruits of the harvest of wheat – and the Feast of Ingathering at the end¹⁶ of the year. **34:23** At three times¹⁷ in the year all your men¹⁸ must appear before the Lord GOD,¹⁹ the

there actually was sexual immorality at the Canaanite altars and poles.

1 tn There is no subject for the verb. It could be rendered “and one invites you,” or it could be made a passive.

2 tn In the construction this verb would follow as a possible outcome of the last event, and so remain in the verbal sequence. If the people participate in the festivals of the land, then they will intermarry, and that could lead to further involvement with idolatry.

3 tn This is an adverbial accusative of time.

4 tn The words “do this” have been supplied.

5 tn Heb “everything that opens the womb.”

6 tn Here too: everything that “opens [the womb].”

7 tn The verb basically means “that drops a male.” The verb is feminine, referring to the cattle.

8 tn Heb “and the one that opens [the womb of] the donkey.”

9 sn See G. Brin, “The Firstling of Unclean Animals,” *JQR* 68 (1971): 1-15.

10 tn The form is the adverb “empty.”

11 tn This is an adverbial accusative of time.

12 tn Or “cease” (i.e., from the labors).

13 sn See M. Dahood, “Vocative *lamed* in Exodus 2,4 and *Merismus* in 34,21,” *Bib* 62 (1981): 413-15.

14 tn The imperfect tense expresses injunction or instruction.

15 tn The imperfect tense means “you will do”; it is followed by the preposition with a suffix to express the ethical dative to stress the subject.

16 tn The expression is “the turn of the year,” which is parallel to “the going out of the year,” and means the end of the agricultural season.

17 tn “Three times” is an adverbial accusative.

18 tn Heb “all your males.”

19 tn Here the divine name reads in Hebrew האֱלֹהִים יְהוָה (*ha'adonay y'hwah*), which if rendered according to the traditional scheme of “LORD” for “Yahweh” would result in “Lord LORD.” A number of English versions therefore render this phrase “Lord God,” and that convention has been followed here.

sn The title “Lord” is included here before the divine name (translated “God” here; see Exod 23:17), perhaps to form a contrast with Baal (which means “lord” as well) and to show

God of Israel. **34:24** For I will drive out²⁰ the nations before you and enlarge your borders; no one will covet²¹ your land when you go up²² to appear before the LORD your God three times²³ in the year.

34:25 “You must not offer the blood of my sacrifice with yeast; the sacrifice from the feast of Passover must not remain until the following morning.²⁴

34:26 “The first of the firstfruits of your soil you must bring to the house of the LORD your God.

You must not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.”²⁵

34:27 The LORD said to Moses, “Write down²⁶ these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”

34:28 So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights;²⁷ he did not eat bread, and he did not drink water. He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.²⁸

the sovereignty of Yahweh. But the distinct designation “the God of Israel” is certainly the point of the renewed covenant relationship.

20 tn The verb is a Hiphil imperfect of יָרַשׁ (*yarash*), which means “to possess.” In the causative stem it can mean “dispossess” or “drive out.”

21 sn The verb “covet” means more than desire; it means that some action will be taken to try to acquire the land that is being coveted. It is one thing to envy someone for their land; it is another to be consumed by the desire that stops at nothing to get it (it, not something like it).

22 tn The construction uses the infinitive construct with a preposition and a suffixed subject to form the temporal clause.

23 tn The expression “three times” is an adverbial accusative of time.

24 sn See M. Haran, “The Passover Sacrifice,” *Studies in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (VTSup), 86-116.

25 sn See the note on this same command in 23:19.

26 tn Once again the preposition with the suffix follows the imperative, adding some emphasis to the subject of the verb.

27 tn These too are adverbial in relation to the main clause, telling how long Moses was with Yahweh on the mountain.

28 tn Heb “the ten words,” though “commandments” is traditional.

The Radiant Face of Moses

34:29¹ Now when Moses came down² from Mount Sinai with³ the two tablets of the testimony in his hand⁴ – when he came down⁵ from the mountain, Moses⁶ did not know that the skin of his face shone⁷ while he talked with him. **34:30** When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face shone;⁸ and they were afraid to approach him. **34:31** But Moses called to them, so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and Moses spoke to them. **34:32** After this all the Israelites approached, and he commanded them all that the LORD had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. **34:33** When Moses finished⁹ speaking¹⁰ with them, he would¹¹ put a veil on his face. **34:34** But when Moses went in¹² before the LORD to speak with him, he would remove the veil until he came

out.¹³ Then he would come out and tell the Israelites what he had been commanded.¹⁴ **34:35** When the Israelites would see¹⁵ the face of Moses, that¹⁶ the skin of Moses' face shone, Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with the LORD.¹⁷

Sabbath Regulations

35:1 Moses assembled the whole community of the Israelites and said to them, “These are the things that the LORD has commanded you to do.”¹⁸ **35:2** In six days¹⁹ work may be done, but on the seventh day there must be a holy day²⁰ for you, a Sabbath of complete rest to the LORD.²¹ Anyone who does work on it will be put to death. **35:3** You must not kindle a fire²² in any of your homes²³ on the Sabbath day.²⁴

1 sn Now, at the culmination of the renewing of the covenant, comes the account of Moses' shining face. It is important to read this in its context first, holding off on the connection to Paul's discussion in 2 Corinthians. There is a delicate balance here in Exodus. On the one hand Moses' shining face served to authenticate the message, but on the other hand Moses prevented the people from seeing more than they could handle. The subject matter in the OT, then, is how to authenticate the message. The section again can be subdivided into three points that develop the whole idea: I. The one who spends time with God reflects his glory (29-30). It will not always be as Moses; rather, the glory of the LORD is reflected differently today, but nonetheless reflected. II. The glory of Yahweh authenticates the message (31-32). III. The authentication of the message must be used cautiously with the weak and immature (33-35).

2 tn The temporal clause is composed of the temporal indicator (“and it happened”), followed by the temporal preposition, infinitive construct, and subjective genitive (“Moses”).

3 tn The second clause begins with “and/now”; it is a circumstantial clause explaining that the tablets were in his hand. It repeats the temporal clause at the end.

4 tn Heb “in the hand of Moses.”

5 tn The temporal clause parallels the first temporal clause; it uses the same infinitive construct, but now with a suffix referring to Moses.

6 tn Heb “and Moses.”

7 tn The word *qaran* (קָרַן) is derived from the noun *qeren* (קֶרֶן) in the sense of a “ray of light” (see Hab 3:4). Something of the divine glory remained with Moses. The Greek translation of Aquila and the Latin Vulgate convey the idea that he had horns, the primary meaning of the word from which this word is derived. Some have tried to defend this, saying that the glory appeared like horns or that Moses covered his face with a mask adorned with horns. But in the text the subject of the verb is the skin of Moses' face (see U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 449).

8 tn This clause is introduced by the deictic particle *hinneh* (הִנֵּה); it has the force of pointing to something surprising or sudden.

9 tn Heb “and Moses finished”; the clause is subordinated as a temporal clause to the next clause.

10 tn The Piel infinitive construct is the object of the preposition; the whole phrase serves as the direct object of the verb “finished.”

11 tn Throughout this section the actions of Moses and the people are frequentative. The text tells what happened regularly.

12 tn The construction uses a infinitive construct for the temporal clause; it is prefixed with the temporal preposition: “and in the going in of Moses.”

13 tn The temporal clause begins with the temporal preposition “until,” followed by an infinitive construct with the suffixed subjective genitive.

14 tn The form is the Pual imperfect, but since the context demands a past tense here, in fact a past perfect tense, this is probably an old preterite form without a *vav* consecutive.

15 tn Now the perfect tense with *vav* consecutive is subordinated to the next clause, “Moses returned the veil....”

16 tn Verbs of seeing often take two accusatives. Here, the second is the noun clause explaining what it was about the face that they saw.

17 tn Heb “with him”; the referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

18 tn Heb “to do them”; this is somewhat redundant in English and has been simplified in the translation.

19 tn This is an adverbial accusative of time.

20 tn The word is *qodesh* (קֹדֶשׁ, “holiness”). S. R. Driver suggests that the word was transposed, and the line should read: “a sabbath of entire rest, holy to Jehovah” (*Exodus*, 379). But the word may simply be taken as a substitution for “holy day.”

21 sn See on this H. Rountenberg, “The Laws of the Sabbath: Biblical Sources,” *Dor le Dor* 6 (1977): 41-43, 99-101, 153-55, 204-6; G. Robinson, “The Idea of Rest in the Old Testament and the Search for the Basic Character of Sabbath,” *ZAW* 92 (1980): 32-43.

22 sn Kindling a fire receives special attention here because the people thought that kindling a fire was not work, but only a preparation for some kind of work. The Law makes sure that this too was not done. But see also G. Robinson, “The Prohibition of Strange Fire in Ancient Israel: A Look at the Case of Gathering Wood and Kindling Fire on the Sabbath,” *VT* 28 (1978): 301-17.

23 tn Heb “dwelling places”; KJV, ASV “habitations.”

24 sn The presence of these three verses in this place has raised all kinds of questions. It may be that after the renewal of the covenant the people needed a reminder to obey God, and obeying the sign of the covenant was the starting point. But there is more to it than this; it is part of the narrative design of the book. It is the artistic design that puts the filling of the Spirit section (31:1-11) prior to the Sabbath laws (31:12-18) before the idolatry section, and then after the renewal there is the Sabbath reminder (35:1-3) before the filling of the Spirit material (35:4-36:7).

Willing Workers

35:4¹ Moses spoke to the whole community of the Israelites, “This is the word that the LORD has commanded: **35:5** ‘Take² an offering for the LORD. Let everyone who has a willing heart³ bring⁴ an offering to the LORD:⁵ gold, silver, bronze, **35:6** blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, fine linen, goat’s hair, **35:7** ram skins dyed red, fine leather,⁶ acacia wood, **35:8** olive oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, **35:9** onyx stones, and other gems⁷ for mounting⁸ on the ephod and the breastpiece. **35:10** Every skilled person⁹ among you is to come and make all that the LORD has commanded: **35:11** the tabernacle with¹⁰ its tent, its covering, its clasps, its frames, its crossbars, its posts, and its bases; **35:12** the ark, with its poles, the atonement lid, and the special curtain that conceals it; **35:13** the table with its poles and all its vessels, and the Bread of the Presence; **35:14** the lampstand for¹¹ the light and its accessories, its lamps, and oil for the light; **35:15** and the altar of incense with its poles, the anointing oil, and the fragrant incense; the hanging for the door at the entrance of the tabernacle; **35:16** the altar for the burnt offering with its bronze grating that is on it, its poles, and all its utensils; the large basin and its pedestal; **35:17** the hangings of the courtyard, its posts and its bases, and the curtain for the gateway to the courtyard; **35:18** tent pegs for the tabernacle and tent pegs for the courtyard and their ropes; **35:19** the woven garments for serving in the holy place, the holy garments for

Aaron the priest, and the garments for his sons to minister as priests.”

35:20 So the whole community of the Israelites went out from the presence of Moses. **35:21** Everyone¹² whose heart stirred him to action¹³ and everyone whose spirit was willing¹⁴ came and brought the offering for the LORD for the work of the tent of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments.¹⁵ **35:22** They came, men and women alike,¹⁶ all who had willing hearts. They brought brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments, all kinds of gold jewelry,¹⁷ and everyone came who waved¹⁸ a wave offering of gold to the LORD.

35:23 Everyone who had¹⁹ blue, purple, or²⁰ scarlet yarn, fine linen, goat’s hair, ram skins dyed red, or fine leather²¹ brought them.²² **35:24** Everyone making an offering of silver or bronze brought it as²³ an offering to the LORD, and everyone who had acacia wood²⁴ for any work of the service brought it.²⁵ **35:25** Every woman who was skilled²⁶ spun with her hands and brought what she had spun, blue, purple, or scarlet yarn, or fine linen, **35:26** and all the women whose

¹ **sn** The book now turns to record how all the work of the sanctuary was done. This next unit picks up on the ideas in Exod 31:1-11. But it adds several features. The first part is the instruction of God for all people to give willingly (35:4-19); the next section tells how the faithful brought an offering for the service of the tabernacle (35:20-29); the next section tells how God set some apart with special gifts (35:30-35), and finally, the narrative reports how the faithful people of God enthusiastically began the work (36:1-7).

² **tn** *Heb* “from with you.”

³ **tn** “Heart” is a genitive of specification, clarifying in what way they might be “willing.” The heart refers to their will, their choices.

⁴ **tn** The verb has a suffix that is the direct object, but the suffixed object is qualified by the second accusative: “let him bring it, an offering.”

⁵ **tn** The phrase is literally “the offering of Yahweh”; it could be a simple possessive, “Yahweh’s offering,” but a genitive that indicates the indirect object is more appropriate.

⁶ **tn** See the note on this phrase in Exod 25:5.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and stones.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “filling.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “wise of heart”; here also “heart” would be a genitive of specification, showing that there were those who could make skillful decisions.

¹⁰ **tn** In Hebrew style all these items are typically connected with a *vav* (ו) conjunction, but English typically uses commas except between the last two items in a series or between items in a series that are somehow related to one another. The present translation follows contemporary English style in lists such as this.

¹¹ **tn** “for” has been supplied.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “man.”

¹³ **tn** The verb means “lift up, bear, carry.” Here the subject is “heart” or will, and so the expression describes one moved within to act.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “his spirit made him willing.” The verb is used in Scripture for the freewill offering that people brought (Lev 7).

¹⁵ **tn** Literally “the garments of holiness,” the genitive is the attributive genitive, marking out what type of garments these were.

¹⁶ **tn** The expression in Hebrew is “men on/after the women,” meaning men with women, to ensure that it was clear that the preceding verse did not mean only men. B. Jacob takes it further, saying that the men came after the women because the latter had taken the initiative (*Exodus*, 1017).

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “all gold utensils.”

¹⁸ **tn** The verb could be translated “offered,” but it is cognate with the following noun that is the wave offering. This sentence underscores the freewill nature of the offerings people made. The word “came” is supplied from v. 21 and v. 22.

¹⁹ **tn** The text uses a relative clause with a resumptive pronoun for this: “who was found with him,” meaning “with whom was found.”

²⁰ **tn** The conjunction in this verse is translated “or” because the sentence does not intend to say that each person had all these things. They brought what they had.

²¹ **tn** See the note on this phrase in Exod 25:5.

²² **tn** Here “them” has been supplied.

²³ **tn** This translation takes “offering” as an adverbial accusative explaining the form or purpose of their bringing things. It could also be rendered as the direct object, but that would seem to repeat without much difference what had just been said.

²⁴ **sn** U. Cassuto notes that the expression “with whom was found” does not rule out the idea that these folks went out and cut down acacia trees (*Exodus*, 458). It is unlikely that they had much wood in their tents.

²⁵ **tn** Here “it” has been supplied.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “wisdom of heart,” which means that they were skilled and could make all the right choices about the work.

heart stirred them to action and who were skilled⁴ spun goats' hair.

35:27 The leaders brought onyx stones and other gems to be mounted² for the ephod and the breastpiece, **35:28** and spices and olive oil for the light, for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense.

35:29 The Israelites brought a freewill offering to the LORD, every man and woman whose heart was willing to bring materials for all the work that the LORD through³ Moses had commanded them⁴ to do.

35:30 Moses said to the Israelites, "See, the LORD has chosen⁵ Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. **35:31** He has filled him with the Spirit of God – with skill, with understanding, with knowledge, and in all kinds of work, **35:32** to design artistic designs, to work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, **35:33** and in cutting stones for their setting,⁶ and in cutting wood, to do work in every artistic craft.⁷ **35:34** And he has put it in his heart⁸ to teach, he and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. **35:35** He has filled them with skill⁹ to do all kinds of work¹⁰ as craftsmen, as designers, as embroiderers in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and in fine linen, and as weavers. They are¹¹ craftsmen in all the work¹² and artistic designers.¹³ **36:1** So Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person¹⁴ in whom the LORD has put skill¹⁵ and ability¹⁶ to know how¹⁷ to do all the work for

the service¹⁸ of the sanctuary are to do the work¹⁹ according to all that the LORD has commanded."

36:2 Moses summoned²⁰ Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person in whom²¹ the LORD had put skill – everyone whose heart stirred him²² to volunteer²³ to do the work, **36:3** and they received from Moses all the offerings the Israelites had brought to do²⁴ the work for the service of the sanctuary, and they still continued to bring him a free-will offering each morning.²⁵ **36:4** So all the skilled people who were doing all the work on the sanctuary came from the work²⁶ they were doing **36:5** and told Moses, "The people are bringing much more than²⁷ is needed for the completion²⁸ of the work which the LORD commanded us to do!"²⁹

36:6 Moses instructed them to take³⁰ his message³¹ throughout the camp, saying, "Let no man or woman do any more work for the offering for the sanctuary." So the people were restrained from bringing any more.³² **36:7** Now the materials were more than enough³³ for them to do all the work.³⁴

18 tn This noun is usually given an interpretive translation. B. Jacob renders the bound relationship as "the holy task" or "the sacred task" (*Exodus*, 1019). The NIV makes it "constructing," so read "the work of constructing the sanctuary."

19 tn The first word of the verse is a perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive; it is singular because it agrees with the first of the compound subject. The sentence is a little cumbersome because of the extended relative clause in the middle.

20 tn The verb *קָרָא* (*qara*) plus the preposition "to" – "to call to" someone means "to summon" that person.

21 tn Here there is a slight change: "in whose heart Yahweh had put skill."

22 tn Or "whose heart was willing."

23 sn The verb means more than "approach" or "draw near"; *קָרַב* (*qarav*) is the word used for drawing near the altar as in bringing an offering. Here they offer themselves, their talents and their time.

24 tn In the Hebrew text the infinitive "to do it" comes after "sanctuary"; it makes a smoother rendering in English to move it forward, rather than reading "brought for the work."

25 tn Heb "in the morning, in the morning."

26 tn Heb "a man, a man from his work"; or "each one from his work."

27 tn The construction uses the verbal hendiadys: *מְרַבִּים לְהַבִּיאַת* (*marbim l'havi*) is the Hiphil participle followed (after the subject) by the Hiphil infinitive construct. It would read, "they multiply...to bring," meaning, "they bring more" than is needed.

28 tn Heb "for the service" (so KJV, ASV).

29 tn The last clause is merely the infinitive with an object – "to do it." It clearly means the skilled workers are to do it.

30 tn The verse simply reads, "and Moses commanded and they caused [a voice] to cross over in the camp." The second preterite with the *vav* may be subordinated to the first clause, giving the intent (purpose or result).

31 tn Heb "voice."

32 tn The verse ends with the infinitive serving as the object of the preposition: "from bringing."

33 tn This part of the sentence comes from the final verb, the Hiphil infinitive – leave over, meaning, have more than enough (see BDB 451 s.v. *הָיָר*).

34 tn Heb "for all the work, to do it."

sn This lengthy section (35:1-36:7) forms one of the most remarkable sections in the book. Here there is a mixture of God's preparation of people to do the work and their willingness to give and to serve. It not only provides insight into this renewed community of believers, but it also provides a timeless message for the church. The point is clear enough: In response to God's commission, and inspired by God's Spirit,

1 tn The text simply uses a prepositional phrase, "with/in wisdom." It seems to be qualifying "the women" as the relative clause is.

2 tn Heb "and stones of the filling."

3 tn Heb "by the hand of."

4 tn Here "them" has been supplied.

5 tn Heb "called by name" (so KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV). This expression means that the person was specifically chosen for some important task (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 342). See the expression with Cyrus in Isa 45:3-4.

6 tn Heb "to set."

7 tn Heb "in every work of thought," meaning, every work that required the implementation of design or plan.

8 sn The expression means that God has given them the ability and the desire to teach others how to do the work. The infinitive construct "to teach" is related to the word Torah, "instruction, guide, law." They will be able to direct others in the work.

9 tn The expression "wisdom of heart," or "wisdom in heart," means artistic skill. The decisions and plans they make are skilled. The expression forms a second accusative after the verb of filling.

10 tn The expression "all the work" means "all kinds of work."

11 tn Here "They are" has been supplied.

12 tn Heb "doers of all work."

13 tn Heb "designers of designs."

14 tn Heb "wise of [in] heart."

15 tn Heb "wisdom."

16 tn Heb "understanding, discernment."

17 tn The relative clause includes this infinitive clause that expresses either the purpose or the result of God's giving wisdom and understanding to these folk.

The Building of the Tabernacle

36:8 All the skilled among those who were doing the work made the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet; they were made with cherubim that were the work of an artistic designer. **36:9** The length of one curtain was forty-two feet, and the width of one curtain was six feet – the same size for each of the curtains. **36:10** He joined¹ five of the curtains to one another, and the other² five curtains he joined to one another. **36:11** He made loops of blue material along the edge of the end curtain in the first set; he did the same along the edge of the end curtain in the second set. **36:12** He made fifty loops on the first curtain, and he made fifty loops on the end curtain that was in the second set, with the loops opposite one another. **36:13** He made fifty gold clasps and joined the curtains together to one another with the clasps, so that the tabernacle was a unit.³

36:14 He made curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle; he made eleven curtains.⁴ **36:15** The length of one curtain was forty-five feet, and the width of one curtain was six feet – one size for all eleven curtains. **36:16** He joined five curtains by themselves and six curtains by themselves. **36:17** He made fifty loops along the edge of the end curtain in the first set and fifty loops along the edge of the curtain that joined the second set. **36:18** He made fifty bronze clasps to join the tent together so that it might be a unit.⁵ **36:19** He made a covering for the tent out of ram skins dyed red and over that a covering of fine leather.⁶

36:20 He made the frames⁷ for the tabernacle of acacia wood⁸ as uprights.⁹ **36:21** The length of each¹⁰ frame was fifteen feet, the width of each¹¹

frame was two and a quarter feet, **36:22** with¹² two projections per frame parallel one to another.¹³ He made all the frames of the tabernacle in this way. **36:23** So he made frames for the tabernacle: twenty frames for the south side. **36:24** He made forty silver bases under the twenty frames – two bases under the first frame for its two projections, and likewise¹⁴ two bases under the next frame for its two projections, **36:25** and for the second side of the tabernacle, the north side, he made twenty frames **36:26** and their forty silver bases, two bases under the first frame and two bases under the next¹⁵ frame. **36:27** And for the back of the tabernacle on the west he made six frames. **36:28** He made two frames for the corners of the tabernacle on the back. **36:29** At the two corners¹⁶ they were doubled at the lower end and¹⁷ finished together at the top in one ring. So he did for both. **36:30** So there were eight frames and their silver bases, sixteen bases, two bases under each frame.

36:31 He made bars of acacia wood, five for the frames on one side of the tabernacle **36:32** and five bars for the frames on the second side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the frames of the tabernacle for the back side on the west. **36:33** He made the middle bar to reach from end to end in the center of the frames. **36:34** He overlaid the frames with gold and made their rings of gold to provide places¹⁸ for the bars, and he overlaid the bars with gold.

36:35 He made the special curtain of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine twisted linen; he made¹⁹ it with cherubim, the work of an artistic designer. **36:36** He made for it four posts of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold, with gold hooks,²⁰ and he cast for them four silver bases.

the faithful and willing people rally to support and participate in the LORD's work.

¹ **tn** The verb is singular since it probably is referring to Bezalel, but since he would not do all the work himself, it may be that the verbs could be given a plural subject: "they joined."

² **tn** The words "the other" have been supplied.

³ **tn** *Heb* "one."

⁴ **tn** *Heb* "eleven curtains he made them."

⁵ **tn** The construction uses the infinitive construct from the verb "to be" to express this purpose clause: "to be one," or, "so that it might be a unit."

⁶ **tn** See the note on this phrase in Exod 25:5.

⁷ **tn** There is debate whether the word *הַקַּרְשִׁים* (*haqq^rrashim*) means "boards" or "frames" or "planks" (see Ezek 27:6) or "beams," given the size of them. The literature on this includes M. Haran, "The Priestly Image of the Tabernacle," *HUCA* 36 (1965): 192; B. A. Levine, "The Description of the Tabernacle Texts of the Pentateuch," *JAOS* 85 (1965): 307-18; J. Morgenstern, "The Ark, the Ephod, and the Tent," *HUCA* 17 (1942/43): 153-265; 18 (1943/44): 1-52.

⁸ **tn** "Wood" is an adverbial accusative.

⁹ **tn** The plural participle "standing" refers to how these items will be situated; they will be vertical rather than horizontal (U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 354).

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "the frame."

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "the one."

¹² **tn** *Heb* "two hands to the one frame."

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "joined one to one."

¹⁴ **tn** The clause is repeated to show the distributive sense; it literally says, "and two bases under the one frame for its two projections."

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "under the one frame" again.

¹⁶ **tn** This is the last phrase of the verse, moved forward for clarity.

¹⁷ **tn** This difficult verse uses the perfect tense at the beginning, and the second clause parallels it with *וַיִּתְּי* (*viityu*), which has to be taken here as a preterite without the consecutive *vav* (ו). The predicate "finished" or "completed" is the word *תָּמִימִם* (*tammim*); it normally means "complete, sound, whole," and related words describe the sacrifices as without blemish.

¹⁸ **tn** Literally "houses"; i.e., places to hold the bars.

¹⁹ **tn** The verb is simply "he made" but as in Exod 26:31 it probably means that the cherubim were worked into the curtain with the yarn, and so embroidered on the curtain.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* "and their hooks gold."

36:37 He made a hanging for the entrance of the tent of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine twisted linen, the work of an embroiderer, **36:38** and its five posts and their hooks. He overlaid their tops¹ and their bands with gold, but their five bases were bronze.²

The Making of the Ark

37:1 Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood; its length was three feet nine inches, its width two feet three inches, and its height two feet three inches. **37:2** He overlaid it with pure gold, inside and out, and he made a surrounding border³ of gold for it. **37:3** He cast four gold rings for it that he put⁴ on its four feet, with⁵ two rings on one side and two rings on the other side. **37:4** He made poles of acacia wood, overlaid them with gold, **37:5** and put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark in order to carry the ark.

37:6 He made⁶ an atonement lid of pure gold; its length was three feet nine inches, and its width was two feet three inches. **37:7** He made two cherubim of gold; he made them of hammered metal on the two ends of the atonement lid, **37:8** one cherub on one end⁷ and one cherub on the other end.⁸ He made the cherubim from the atonement lid on its two ends. **37:9** The cherubim were spreading their wings⁹ upward, overshadowing the atonement lid with their wings. The cherubim¹⁰ faced each other,¹¹ looking toward the atonement lid.¹²

The Making of the Table

37:10 He made the table of acacia wood; its length was three feet, its width one foot six inches, and its height two feet three inches.

37:11 He overlaid it with pure gold, and he made a surrounding border of gold for it. **37:12** He made a surrounding frame for it about three inches wide, and he made a surrounding border of gold for its frame. **37:13** He cast four gold rings for it and attached the rings at the four corners where its four legs were. **37:14** The rings were close to the frame to provide places for the poles to carry the table. **37:15** He made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold, to carry the table. **37:16** He made the vessels which were on the table out of pure gold, its¹³ plates, its ladles, its pitchers, and its bowls, to be used in pouring out offerings.

The Making of the Lampstand

37:17 He made the lampstand of pure gold. He made the lampstand of hammered metal; its base and its shaft, its cups, its buds, and its blossoms were from the same piece.¹⁴ **37:18** Six branches were extending from its sides, three branches of the lampstand from one side of it, and three branches of the lampstand from the other side of it. **37:19** Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms were on the first branch, and three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms were on the next¹⁵ branch, and the same¹⁶ for the six branches that were extending from the lampstand. **37:20** On the lampstand there were four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms, **37:21** with a bud under the first two branches from it, and a bud under the next two branches from it, and a bud under the third two branches from it; according to the six branches that extended from it.¹⁷ **37:22** Their buds and their branches were of one piece;¹⁸ all of it was one hammered piece of pure gold. **37:23** He made its seven lamps, its trimmers, and its trays of pure gold. **37:24** He made the lampstand¹⁹ and all its accessories with seventy-five pounds of pure gold.

The Making of the Altar of Incense

37:25 He made the incense altar of acacia wood. Its length was a foot and a half and its width a foot and a half – a square – and its height was three feet. Its horns were of one piece

¹ **tn** The word is “their heads”; technically it would be “their capitals” (so ASV, NAB, NRSV). The bands were bands of metal surrounding these capitals just beneath them. These are not mentioned in Exod 26:37, and it sounds like the posts are to be covered with gold. But the gradation of metals is what is intended: the posts at the entrance to the Most Holy Place are all of gold; the posts at the entrance to the tent are overlaid with gold at the top; and the posts at the entrance to the courtyard are overlaid with silver at the top (S. R. Driver, *Exodus*, 387, citing Dillmann without reference).

² **sn** For a good summary of the differences between the instruction section and the completion section, and the reasons for the changes and the omissions, see B. Jacob, *Exodus*, 1022-23.

³ **tn** Or “molding.”

⁴ **tn** “that he put” has been supplied.

⁵ **tn** This is taken as a circumstantial clause; the clause begins with the conjunction *vav*.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and he made.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “from/at [the] end, from this.”

⁸ **tn** The repetition of the expression indicates it has the distributive sense.

⁹ **tn** The construction is a participle in construct followed by the genitive “wings” – “spreaders of wings.”

¹⁰ **tn** “The cherubim” has been placed here instead of in the second clause to produce a smoother translation.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “and their faces a man to his brother.”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “to the atonement lid were the faces of the cherubim.”

¹³ **tn** The suffixes on these could also indicate the indirect object (see Exod 25:29).

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “from it”; the referent (“the same piece” of wrought metal) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “the one branch.” But the repetition of “one... one” means here one after another, or the “first” and then the “next.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “thus for six branches...”

¹⁷ **tn** As in Exod 26:35, the translation of “first” and “next” and “third” is interpretive, because the text simply says “under two branches” in each of three places.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “were from it.”

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “it”; the referent (the lampstand) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

with it.¹ **37:26** He overlaid it with pure gold – its top,² its four walls,³ and its horns – and he made a surrounding border of gold for it.⁴ **37:27** He also made⁵ two gold rings for it under its border, on its two sides, on opposite sides,⁶ as places⁷ for poles to carry it with. **37:28** He made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold.

37:29 He made the sacred anointing oil and the pure fragrant incense, the work of a perfumer.

The Making of the Altar for the Burnt Offering

38:1 He made the altar for the burnt offering of acacia wood seven feet six inches long and seven feet six inches wide – it was square – and its height was four feet six inches. **38:2** He made its horns on its four corners; its horns were part of it,⁸ and he overlaid it with bronze. **38:3** He made all the utensils of the altar – the pots, the shovels, the tossing bowls, the meat hooks, and the fire pans – he made all its utensils of bronze. **38:4** He made a grating for the altar, a network of bronze under its ledge, halfway up from the bottom. **38:5** He cast four rings for the four corners of the bronze grating, to provide places for the poles. **38:6** He made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with bronze. **38:7** He put the poles into the rings on the sides of the altar, with which to carry it. He made the altar⁹ hollow, out of boards.

38:8 He made the large basin of bronze and its pedestal of bronze from the mirrors of the women who served¹⁰ at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

The Construction of the Courtyard

38:9 He made the courtyard. For the south side¹¹ the hangings of the courtyard were of fine twisted linen, one hundred fifty feet long,

38:10 with¹² their twenty posts and their twenty bronze bases, with the hooks of the posts and their bands of silver. **38:11** For the north side the hangings were¹³ one hundred fifty feet, with their twenty posts and their twenty bronze bases, with the hooks of the posts and their bands of silver. **38:12** For the west side there were¹⁴ hangings seventy-five feet long, with¹⁵ their ten posts and their ten bases, with the hooks of the posts and their bands of silver. **38:13** For the east side, toward the sunrise, it was seventy-five feet wide,¹⁶ **38:14** with hangings on one side¹⁷ of the gate that were twenty-two and a half feet long, with their three posts and their three bases, **38:15** and for the second side of the gate of the courtyard, just like the other,¹⁸ the hangings were twenty-two and a half feet long, with their three posts and their three bases. **38:16** All the hangings around the courtyard were of fine twisted linen. **38:17** The bases for the posts were bronze. The hooks of the posts and their bands were silver, their tops were overlaid with silver, and all the posts of the courtyard had silver bands.¹⁹ **38:18** The curtain²⁰ for the gate of the courtyard was of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine twisted linen, the work of an embroiderer. It was thirty feet long, and like the hangings in the courtyard, it was seven and a half feet high, **38:19** with four posts and their four bronze bases. Their hooks and their bands were silver, and their tops were overlaid with silver. **38:20** All the tent pegs of the tabernacle and of the courtyard all around were bronze.

¹ **tn** *Heb* “from it were its horns,” meaning that they were made from the same piece.

² **tn** *Heb* “roof.”

³ **tn** *Heb* “its walls around.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and he made for it border gold around.”

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and he made.”

⁶ **sn** Since it was a small altar, it needed only two rings, one on either side, in order to be carried. The second mention of their location clarifies that they should be on the sides, the right and the left, as one approached the altar.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “for houses.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “its horns were from it,” meaning from the same piece.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “it”; the referent (the altar) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁰ **sn** The word for “serve” is not the ordinary one. It means “to serve in a host,” especially in a war. It appears that women were organized into bands and served at the tent of meeting. S. R. Driver thinks that this meant “no doubt” washing, cleaning, or repairing (*Exodus*, 391). But there is no hint of that (see 1 Sam 2:22; and see Ps 68:11 [12 HT]). They seem to have had more to do than what Driver said.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “south side southward.”

¹² **tn** While this verse could be translated as an independent sentence, it is probably to be subordinated as a circumstantial clause in line with Exod 27:10-12, as well as v. 12 of this passage.

¹³ **tn** Here the phrase “the hangings were” has been supplied.

¹⁴ **tn** The phrase “there were” has been supplied.

¹⁵ **tn** The text simply has “their posts ten and their bases ten”; this may be added here as a circumstantial clause with the main sentence in order to make sense out of the construction.

¹⁶ **tn** The text simply says “seventy-five feet.”

¹⁷ **tn** The word literally means “shoulder.” The next words, “of the gate,” have been supplied here. The east end contained the courtyard’s entry with a wall of curtains on each side of the entry (see v. 15).

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “from this and from this” (cf. 17:12; 25:19; 26:13; 32:15; Josh 8:22, 33; 1 Kgs 10:19-20; Ezek 45:7).

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “they were banded with silver.”

²⁰ **tn** This word is different from the word for hangings; it has more of the idea of a screen, shielding or securing the area.

The Materials of the Construction

38:21 This is the inventory⁴ of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, which was counted² by the order³ of Moses, being the work⁴ of the Levites under the direction⁵ of Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest. **38:22** Now Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made everything that the LORD had commanded Moses; **38:23** and with him was Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an artisan, a designer, and an embroiderer in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen.

38:24 All the gold that was used for the work, in all the work of the sanctuary⁶ (namely,⁷ the gold of the wave offering) was twenty-nine talents and 730 shekels,⁸ according to the sanctuary shekel.

38:25 The silver of those who were numbered of the community was one hundred talents and 1,775 shekels,⁹ according to the sanctuary shekel, **38:26** one beka per person, that is, a half shekel,¹⁰ according to the sanctuary shekel, for everyone who crossed over to those numbered, from twenty years old or older,¹¹ 603,550 in all.¹² **38:27** The one hundred talents of silver were used for casting the bases of the sanctuary and the bases of the special curtain – one hun-

dred bases for one hundred talents, one talent per base. **38:28** From the remaining 1,775 shekels¹³ he made hooks for the posts, overlaid their tops, and made bands for them.

38:29 The bronze of the wave offering was seventy talents and 2,400 shekels.¹⁴ **38:30** With it he made the bases for the door of the tent of meeting, the bronze altar, the bronze grating for it, and all the utensils of the altar, **38:31** the bases for the courtyard all around, the bases for the gate of the courtyard, all the tent pegs of the tabernacle, and all the tent pegs of the courtyard all around.¹⁵

The Making of the Priestly Garments

39:1 From the blue, purple, and scarlet yarn they made woven garments for serving in the sanctuary; they made holy garments that were for Aaron, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.¹⁶

The Ephod

39:2 He made the ephod of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twisted linen. **39:3** They hammered the gold into thin sheets and cut it into narrow strips to weave¹⁷ them into the blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, and into the fine linen, the work of an artistic designer. **39:4** They made shoulder pieces for it, attached to two of its corners, so it could be joined together. **39:5** The artistically woven waistband of the ephod that was on it was like it, of one piece with it,¹⁸ of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine twisted linen, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

39:6 They set the onyx stones in gold filigree settings, engraved as with the engravings of a seal¹⁹ with the names of the sons of Israel. **39:7** He put²¹ them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as stones of memorial for the Israelites, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹ **tn** The Hebrew word is פְּקֻדָּה (*p^equde*), which in a slavishly literal way would be “visitations of” the tabernacle. But the word often has the idea of “numbering” or “appointing” as well. Here it is an accounting or enumeration of the materials that people brought, so the contemporary term “inventory” is a close approximation. By using this Hebrew word there is also the indication that whatever was given, i.e., appointed for the tabernacle, was changed forever in its use. This is consistent with this Hebrew root, which does have a sense of changing the destiny of someone (“God will surely visit you”). The list in this section will also be tied to the numbering of the people.

² **tn** The same verb is used here, but now in the Pual perfect tense, third masculine singular. A translation “was numbered” or “was counted” works. The verb is singular because it refers to the tabernacle as a unit. This section will list what made up the tabernacle.

³ **tn** Heb “at/by the mouth of.”

⁴ **tn** The noun is “work” or “service.” S. R. Driver explains that the reckonings were not made for the Levites, but that they were the work of the Levites, done by them under the direction of Ithamar (*Exodus*, 393).

⁵ **tn** Heb “by the hand of.”

⁶ **tn** These words form the *casus pendens*, or independent nominative absolute, followed by the apodosis beginning with the *vav* (ו; see U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 469).

⁷ **tn** Heb “and it was.”

⁸ **sn** There were 3000 shekels in a talent, and so the total weight here in shekels would be 87,730 shekels of gold. If the sanctuary shekel was 224 grs., then this was about 40,940 oz. Troy. This is estimated to be a little over a ton (cf. NCV “over 2,000 pounds”; TEV “a thousand kilogrammes”; CEV “two thousand two hundred nine pounds”; NLT “about 2,200 pounds”), although other widely diverging estimates are also given.

⁹ **sn** This would be a total of 301,775 shekels (about 140,828 oz.), being a half shekel exacted per person from 605,550 male Israelites 20 years old or more (*Num* 1:46). The amount is estimated to be around 3.75 tons.

¹⁰ **sn** The weight would be about half an ounce.

¹¹ **tn** Heb “upward.”

¹² **tn** The phrase “in all” has been supplied.

¹³ **tn** Here the word “shekels” is understood; about 45 pounds.

¹⁴ **sn** The total shekels would have been 212,400 shekels, which would be about 108,749 oz. This would make about 2.5 to 3 tons.

¹⁵ **sn** The bronze altar is the altar for the burnt offering; the large bronze basin is not included here in the list.

¹⁶ **sn** This chapter also will be almost identical to the instructions given earlier, with a few changes along the way.

¹⁷ **tn** The verb is the infinitive that means “to do, to work.” It could be given a literal rendering: “to work [them into] the blue....” Weaving or embroidering is probably what is intended.

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “from it” or the same.

¹⁹ **tn** Or “as seals are engraved.”

²⁰ **sn** The twelve names were those of Israel’s sons. The idea was not the remembrance of the twelve sons as such, but the twelve tribes that bore their names.

²¹ **tn** Or “attached.”

The Breastpiece of Decision

39:8 He made the breastpiece, the work of an artistic designer, in the same fashion as the ephod, of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine twisted linen. **39:9** It was square – they made the breastpiece doubled, nine inches long and nine inches wide when doubled. **39:10** They set on it¹ four rows of stones: a row with a ruby, a topaz, and a beryl – the first row; **39:11** and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald; **39:12** and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; **39:13** and the fourth row, a chrysolite, an onyx, and a jasper. They were enclosed in gold filigree settings. **39:14** The stones were for the names of the sons of Israel, twelve, corresponding to the number of² their names. Each name corresponding to one of the twelve tribes was like the engravings of a seal.

39:15 They made for the breastpiece braided chains like cords of pure gold, **39:16** and they made two gold filigree settings and two gold rings, and they attached the two rings to the upper³ two ends of the breastpiece. **39:17** They attached the two gold chains to the two rings at the ends of the breastpiece; **39:18** the other⁴ two ends of the two chains they attached to the two settings, and they attached them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front of it. **39:19** They made two rings of gold and put them on the other⁵ two ends of the breastpiece on its edge, which is on the inner side of the ephod.⁶ **39:20** They made two more⁷ gold rings and attached them to the bottom of the two shoulder pieces on the front of the ephod, close to the juncture above the waistband of the ephod. **39:21** They tied the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod by blue cord, so that it was above the waistband of the ephod, so that the breastpiece would not be loose from the ephod, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

The Other Garments

39:22 He made the robe of the ephod completely blue, the work of a weaver. **39:23** There was an opening in the center of the robe, like the opening of a collar, with an edge all around the opening so that it could not be torn. **39:24** They made pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and twisted linen⁸ around the hem of the robe.

39:25 They made bells of pure gold and attached the bells between the pomegranates around the hem of the robe between the pomegranates. **39:26** There was⁹ a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, all around the hem of the robe, to be used in ministering,¹⁰ just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

39:27 They made tunics of fine linen – the work of a weaver, for Aaron and for his sons – **39:28** and the turban of fine linen, the headbands of fine linen, and the undergarments of fine twisted linen. **39:29** The sash was of fine twisted linen and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, the work of an embroiderer, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. **39:30** They made a plate, the holy diadem, of pure gold and wrote on it an inscription, as on the engravings of a seal, “Holiness to the LORD.” **39:31** They attached to it a blue cord, to attach it to the turban above, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Moses Inspects the Sanctuary

39:32¹¹ So all the work of the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, was completed, and the Israelites did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses – they did it exactly so. **39:33** They brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its furnishings, clasps, frames, bars, posts, and bases; **39:34** and the coverings of ram skins dyed red, the covering of fine leather,¹² and the protecting¹³ curtain; **39:35** the ark of the testimony and its poles, and the atonement lid; **39:36** the table, all its utensils, and the Bread of the Presence; **39:37** the pure¹⁴ lampstand, its lamps, with the lamps set in order, and all its accessories, and oil for the light; **39:38** and the gold altar, and the anointing oil, and the fragrant incense; and the curtain for the entrance to the tent; **39:39** the bronze altar and its bronze grating, its poles, and all its utensils; the large basin with its pedestal; **39:40** the hangings of the courtyard, its posts and its bases, and the curtain for the gateway of the courtyard, its ropes and its tent pegs, and all the furnishings¹⁵ for the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting; **39:41** the woven garments for serving¹⁶ in the sanctuary, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments for his sons to minister as priests.

⁹ tn The words “there was” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁰ tn The infinitive “to minister” is present; “to be used” is supplied from the context.

¹¹ sn The last sections of the book bring several themes together to a full conclusion. Not only is it the completion of the tabernacle, it is the fulfillment of God’s plan revealed at the beginning of the book, i.e., to reside with his people.

¹² tn See the note on this phrase in Exod 25:5.

¹³ tn Or “shielding” (NIV); NASB “the screening veil.”

¹⁴ tn Possibly meaning “pure gold lampstand.”

¹⁵ tn Heb “utensils, vessels.”

¹⁶ tn The form is the infinitive construct; it means the clothes to be used “to minister” in the holy place.

¹ tn That is, they set in mountings.

² tn The phrase “the number of” has been supplied.

³ tn Here “upper” has been supplied.

⁴ tn Here “other” has been supplied.

⁵ tn Here “other” has been supplied.

⁶ tn Heb “homeward side.”

⁷ tn Here “more” has been supplied.

⁸ tn The word is simply “twined” or “twisted.” It may refer to the twisted linen that so frequently is found in these lists; or, it may refer to the yarn twisted. The LXX reads “fine twined linen.” This is not found in the text of Exod 28:33, except in Smr and LXX.

39:42 The Israelites did all the work according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses. **39:43** Moses inspected¹ all the work – and² they had done it just as the LORD had commanded – they had done it exactly – and Moses blessed them.³

Setting Up the Sanctuary

40:1⁴ Then the LORD spoke to Moses:⁵ **40:2** “On the first day of the first month you are to set up⁶ the tabernacle, the tent of meeting. **40:3** You are to place the ark of the testimony in it and shield the ark with the special curtain. **40:4** You are to bring in the table and set out the things that belong on it;⁷ then you are to bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps. **40:5** You are to put⁸ the gold altar for incense in front of the ark of the testimony and put the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle. **40:6** You are to put the altar for the burnt offering in front of the entrance to the tabernacle, the tent of meeting. **40:7** You are to put the large basin between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it.⁹ **40:8** You are to set up the courtyard around it and put the curtain at the gate of the courtyard. **40:9** And take¹⁰ the anointing oil, and anoint¹¹ the tabernacle and all that is in it, and sanctify¹² it and all its

furnishings, and it will be holy. **40:10** Then you are to anoint the altar for the burnt offering with¹³ all its utensils; you are to sanctify the altar, and it will be the most holy altar. **40:11** You must also anoint the large basin and its pedestal, and you are to sanctify it.¹⁴

40:12 “You are to bring¹⁵ Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and wash them with water. **40:13** Then you are to clothe Aaron with the holy garments and anoint him and sanctify him so that he may minister as my priest. **40:14** You are to bring¹⁶ his sons and clothe them with tunics **40:15** and anoint them just as you anointed their father, so that they may minister as my priests; their anointing will make them a priesthood that will continue throughout their generations.” **40:16** This is what Moses did, according to all the LORD had commanded him – so he did.

40:17 So the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month, in the second year. **40:18** When Moses set up the tabernacle and put its bases in place, he set up its frames, attached its bars, and set up its posts. **40:19** Then he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent over it, as the LORD had commanded Moses. **40:20** He took the testimony and put it in the ark, attached the poles to the ark, and then put the atonement lid on the ark. **40:21** And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, hung¹⁷ the protecting curtain,¹⁸ and shielded the ark of the testimony from view, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹ **tn** Or “examined” (NASB, TEV); NCV “looked closely at.”

² **tn** The deictic particle draws attention to what he saw in such a way as to give the reader Moses’ point of view and sense of his pleasure: “and behold, they...”

³ **sn** The situation and wording in Exod 39:43 are reminiscent of Gen 1:28 and 31, with the motifs of blessing people and inspecting what has been made.

⁴ **sn** All of Exod 39:32-40:38 could be taken as a unit. The first section (39:32-43) shows that the Israelites had carefully and accurately completed the preparation and brought everything they had made to Moses: The work of the LORD builds on the faithful obedience of the people. In the second section are the instruction and the implementation (40:1-33): The work of the LORD progresses through the unifying of the work. The last part (40:34-38) may take the most attention: When the work was completed, the glory filled the tabernacle: By his glorious presence, the LORD blesses and directs his people in their worship.

⁵ **tn** Heb “and Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying.”

⁶ **tn** Heb “you will raise,” an imperfect of instruction.

⁷ **tn** Heb “and you will set in order its setting” or “arrange its arrangement.” See 25:29-30 for items that belonged on the table.

⁸ **tn** Heb “give” (also four additional times in vv. 6-8).

⁹ **tn** Heb “there.”

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “you will take” (perfect with *vav*, 1).

¹¹ **tn** Heb “and you will anoint” (perfect with *vav*, 1).

¹² **tn** Heb “and you will sanctify” (perfect with *vav*, 1).

¹³ **tn** Heb “and.”

¹⁴ **sn** U. Cassuto (*Exodus*, 480) notes that the items inside the tent did not need to be enumerated since they were already holy, but items in the courtyard needed special attention. People needed to know that items outside the tent were just as holy.

¹⁵ **tn** The verb is “bring near,” or “present,” to Yahweh.

¹⁶ **tn** The verb is also “bring near” or “present.”

¹⁷ **tn** Heb “set up,” if it includes more than the curtain.

¹⁸ **tn** Or “shielding” (NIV); Heb “the veil of the covering” (cf. KJV).

40:22 And he put the table in the tent of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the curtain. **40:23** And he set the bread in order on it¹ before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

40:24 And he put the lampstand in the tent of meeting opposite the table, on the south side of the tabernacle. **40:25** Then he set up the lamps before the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

40:26 And he put the gold altar in the tent of meeting in front of the curtain, **40:27** and he burned fragrant incense on it, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

40:28 Then he put the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle. **40:29** He also put the altar for the burnt offering by the entrance to the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the meal offering, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

40:30 Then he put the large basin between the tent of meeting and the altar and put water in it² for washing. **40:31** Moses and Aaron and his sons would wash their hands and their feet from it. **40:32** Whenever they entered³ the tent of meeting, and whenever they approached⁴ the altar, they would wash,⁵ just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

40:33 And he set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and the altar, and put the curtain at the gate of the courtyard. So Moses finished the work.

40:34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

40:35 Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. **40:36** But when the cloud was lifted up⁶ from the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out⁷ on all their journeys; **40:37** but if the cloud was not lifted up, then they would not journey further until the day it was lifted up.⁸ **40:38** For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, but fire would be⁹ on it at night, in plain view¹⁰ of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

¹ **tn** *Heb* uses a cognate accusative construction, "he arranged the arrangement."

² **tn** *Heb* "there."

³ **tn** The construction is the infinitive construct with the temporal preposition and the suffixed subjective genitive. This temporal clause indicates that the verb in the preceding verse was frequentative.

⁴ **tn** This is another infinitive construct in a temporal clause.

⁵ **tn** In this explanatory verse the verb is a customary imperfect.

⁶ **tn** The construction uses the Niphal infinitive construct to form the temporal clause.

⁷ **tn** The imperfect tense in this context describes a customary action.

⁸ **tn** The clause uses the Niphal infinitive construct in the temporal clause: "until the day of its being taken up."

⁹ **tn** Here is another imperfect tense of the customary nuance.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "to the eyes of all"; KJV, ASV, NASB "in the sight of all"; NRSV "before the eyes of all."