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EXODUS

The book of Exodus is named after the subject of the first fifteen chapters of the book: the liberation of Israel from Egypt by "the God of Abraham . . . Isaac, and . . . Jacob" (3.15). The book continues with various laws that distinguish the community (chs 20–23, 34), as well as the instructions for the construction of the tabernacle (chs 25–40), which are narrated in great detail, and assure that a holy God will reside among the people.

It is impossible to discern what historical events lie behind the book of Exodus, given the lack of contemporaneous evidence outside the Bible. Reconstructions run the gamut from identifying the Pharaoh of the plagues with Rameses II (1279–1213 BCE) to asserting that the entire story is metaphorical, and Israel was never in Egypt. Those favoring a historical reading of the book have noted that no nation is likely to make up a story that its ancestors had been slaves. Those favoring a metaphorical reading have suggested that the tyranny experienced reflects Egypt's political and economic domination of the land of Canaan in the Late Bronze Age. They emphasize the continuity of Israelite culture with Canaanite (rather than Egyptian) culture in architecture, crafts, language, and worship. There is also uncertainty about most of the place names in the book, even about the location of Mount Sinai, where the covenant between God and Israel is made. Nor is there a consensus on the authorship and date of the various parts of this complex work. Some sections are Priestly (compare 20.8–11 with Gen 2.1–3, and note the interest in the priestly tabernacle in chs 25–40), a few are clearly reminiscent of Deuteronomy (compare 23.23–33 with Deuteronomy 7), and some contain material usually ascribed to JE, traditionally considered to be the earliest sources of the Pentateuch. Underlying the final form of the book is a complicated literary prehistory, in which the sources or "documents" of the Pentateuch (J, E, and P; see pp. 4–6 HB) have been combined in a way that values the preservation of divergent traditions more than a superficial consistency. The book also includes an often bewildering variety of smaller units from various stages of Israel's history. These include hymns and hymnic fragments, itineraries, ritual traditions, and legal codifications, along with elements of myth and folklore, and birth and contest narratives. Some of these traditions are relatively ancient and may well reflect authentic historical memory.

In the absence of a consensus concerning the book's historicity and composition, it is best to read Exodus as a finished narrative, a story—though never forgetting that it has a prehistory, and that in its final form within the larger story of the Torah or Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, it is the definitive story of the establishment of Israel as a people freed from human tyranny who became slaves to their own loving God.

God's purpose in liberating Israel is expressed in several similar ways: in order to establish an exclusive relationship ("I will take you as my people, and I will be your God," 6.7; "I . . . brought you to myself," 19.4), to make them unique ("my treasured possession out of all the peoples, . . . a priestly kingdom and a holy nation," 19.5–6), and to "dwell among them" (29.46). Indeed, the Exodus is inextricably tied to the provisions of the covenant by providing reason and motivation for much of what God expects of the people. In worship, the experience of liberation from slavery prompts the Israelites to reinterpret ancient festivals, instilling them with completely new meaning: passover (12.1–13n.), unleavened bread (12.14–20n.), and sacrifice of firstborn (13.1–2n.). Like

wise, in late biblical legislation, the festival of booths comes to commemorate the wilderness wandering (Lev 23:39–43), and in postbiblical Judaism, the festival of weeks celebrates the giving of the covenant at Sinai (19.1n.). The central commandment, “you shall have no other gods before me,” is immediately preceded by the identification of God as the one “who brought you out of the land of Egypt” (20.1–3). An important part of teaching children is to explain that many customs are based on the experience of liberation (12.24–27n.). Ethically, God uses the experience of oppression to motivate the covenant partner: the Israelites’ memory of being aliens in Egypt gives them empathy for aliens within Israel (22.21; 23.9). Thus, the Exodus is truly the central, unifying focus of the book.

One way to express the movement in Exodus is to say that chs 1–15 tell the story of freedom from slavery, while chs 16–40 tell the story of the freed Israelites entering into a set of obligations with their God. This is explicitly reflected in 7:16, where the LORD sent Moses to demand of the Pharaoh: “Let my people go, so that they may worship [literally, serve/be slaves to] me” (see also 4.23). The people are still servants, but the change of masters makes all the difference. Additionally, Israel was forced to serve Pharaoh, while it freely decides to serve the LORD (24.3,7).

Another way to understand the book is to visualize its geographical movement. Chapters 1–15 tell the story of leaving the city where the evil Pharaoh reigns and enslaves the Hebrews; chs 16–40 tell the story of arriving at the mountain where a holy God reigns and creates the people of Israel. In Egypt a royal construction program enslaves Hebrews; Hebrew boys are killed, and in the end God claims the lives of all the firstborn of Egypt, human and animal alike. At Sinai all the firstborn males of Israel, human and animal alike, are equally claimed by God. A new royal construction program is inaugurated, for building the portable tabernacle that assures the continuing presence of God among the new people as they travel to the promised land.

Indeed, this geographical movement can be understood more specifically as a pilgrimage undertaken first by Moses alone (chs 2–4), then by all the people (chs 13–40). Each pilgrimage proceeds from the evil land where Pharaoh reigns, through the desert to the holy mountain where the God of Sinai reigns. The goal of each pilgrimage is experiencing God through a theophany, a divine appearance, and receiving a commission. The first theophany is for Moses alone (3.1–6), the second is for all Israel (19.16–19) but is too much for them to bear (20.18–21), so the third is for the leaders only (24.9–11), and the fourth is for Moses alone as covenant mediator (24.15–18). While Moses’ commission is to act as God’s agent in freeing the people (chs 3–4), Israel’s commission is to act as God’s holy people in all areas of life (chs 19–24) and to build a shrine so that God may dwell in their presence (chs 25–31). The first effort to fulfill each commission fails: Moses’ first appearance before Pharaoh only makes the oppression worse (ch 5), and Israel’s first impatient attempt to ensure God’s continuing presence among them, the construction of the calf, almost brings complete destruction (ch 32). But after each commission is restated (6.2–7.7; 34.10–28 after a fifth theophany, again for Moses alone, 33.17–34.9), the second attempt is successful. Moses finally leads the slaves to freedom (chs 7–15), and Israel finally builds the tabernacle so that God may dwell among them (chs 35–40).

There is more than one way to outline the book, since many of the stories it narrates point both backward and forward. For example, the hymn in ch 15 points backward to celebrate the victories of the divine warrior, while it also points ahead to anticipate the terror of the other peoples and the march forward to God’s mountain. Thus, the following suggested structure of the book is necessarily one-dimensional.

- 1.1–15.21. God liberates Israel from slavery by defeating Pharaoh
- 15.22–18.27. God journeys with Israel to Mount Sinai
- 19.1–31.18. God establishes the covenant with Israel
- 32.1–34.35. Israel breaks the covenant, but God reestablishes it
- 35.1–40.38. Israel obeys instructions, and God takes up residence with them

EXODUS 1.1–1.9

Many recurrent words and themes tie the book's different parts together. For example, some of the themes that frame the first part of the story, that of liberation, are women's activities (15.19–21n.); a life-threatening body of water with reeds (2.3n.), a loud cry (2.23n.), the plundering of Egypt (3.21–22n.); God's claim on the firstborn son (4.22–23n.), and ritual with blood (as protection against death at God's hand, 4.24–26n.):

The Hebrew word for heaviness (5.9), referring not only to the "hardening" of Pharaoh's heart (7.14; 8.15,32; 9.7,34; 10.1) but also to God's "glory" (14.4,17–18; 16.7,10; 24.16–17; 29.43; 33.18,22; 40.34–35), unifies the book. Other themes tie the parts of the story together: knowledge, or better, acknowledgment of God (5.2n.); the distinction between Israel and other peoples (Egypt, 8.22–23n.; other peoples, 15.13–18n.); and proper service/worship: first the right object of service, not the Pharaoh but God; second, the right means of worship; not a golden calf (ch 32) but a tabernacle (chs 25–31; 35–40). Several of the themes that frame the first part of the story, liberation, recur in the second half, covenant, thus linking the two sections together: the treasures from Egypt used both to break and to keep the covenant (3.21–22n.); the firstborn (4.22–23n.); and ritual with blood (now sealing the covenant between God and Israel, 24.3–8n.; and consecrating the priests, 29.20–21n.).

Another important pattern is God's precise command followed by Moses' exact obedience. It can be seen (7.6n.) in Moses' two commissions, the plagues, the victory at the sea, several incidents during the journey, and preeminently the instructions for making the tabernacle (chs 25–31). The one case of disobedience, the construction of the golden calf (ch 32), disrupts this theme. Moses must intercede four times, many Israelites must die, and three chapters are required before the story can get back on track. Finally the commands of chs 25–31 are carried out in chs 35–40, and God indeed takes up residence among the people.

1 These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household: ²Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, ³Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, ⁴Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. ⁵The total number of people born to Jacob was seventy. Joseph was already in Egypt. ⁶Then Joseph died, and all his brothers, and that whole generation. ⁷But the Israelites were fruitful and prolific; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.

⁸ Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than

1.1–15.21: God liberates Israel from slavery by defeating Pharaoh.

1.1–22: The Israelites suffer oppression in Egypt. In spite of their suffering, the descendants of Jacob (Israel) multiply and prosper, in fulfillment of the divine promise repeated to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 12.2; 15.5; 22.17; 26.4; 28.14). V. 7 echoes the Priestly Gen 1.28, suggesting that the growth of Israel fulfills the divine blessing of creation as well. **1–7:** An abbreviated version of Gen 46.8–27, serving as a transition from Jacob's family in Genesis to the people Israel in Exodus. **1–5:** The sons are listed according to their mothers: Leah's six, Rachel's second, Bilhah's two, and Zilpah's two (Gen 29.31–30.24; 35.16–20,23–26). Rachel's firstborn, *Joseph*, whose story has been told in Gen 37–50, is mentioned in v. 5. Daughters such as Dinah (Gen 30.21; 34) are not counted in this list of heads of households (v. 1). **5:** *Total number of people . . . was seventy*, Gen 46.8–27; Deut 10.22. **6:** Gen 50.26. According to Ex 12.40 (cf. Gen 15.13) over four centuries have elapsed since Joseph's death. **7:** *The land of Goshen in northeastern Egypt* (8.22; Gen 45.10; Map on p. 28 HB). **8–14:** The *new king* attempts to counter the growth of the Israelite people by subjecting them to *forced labor* (Gen 15.13). **8:** *Know*, does not *acknowledge* any obligation to Joseph's descendants. **9–10:** The presence of the Israelites on Egypt's frontier is regarded as a security risk. **11:** *Pithom* and *Rameses* are presumably in Goshen, though their

we. ¹⁰Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." ¹¹Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. ¹²But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. ¹³The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, ¹⁴and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

¹⁵The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ¹⁶"When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live." ¹⁷But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. ¹⁸So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?" ¹⁹The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." ²⁰So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. ²¹And because the midwives feared God, he gave them fami-

lies. ²²Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."

2 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. ²The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. ³When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. ⁴His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

⁵The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. ⁶When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. ⁷Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" ⁸Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. ¹⁰When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and

a Sam Gk Tg: Heb lacks to the Hebrews

precise locations are disputed. **15-22:** Forced labor having failed, the king now attempts genocide. **15:** The term *Hebrew* probably refers to displaced persons rather than to a specific ethnic group. In Exodus the word occurs about a dozen times in chs 1-9, but afterward only once (21.2). *Hebrew midwives*, alternatively "midwives of the Hebrews," in which case *Shiphrah* and *Puah* may be Egyptians, the first outsiders to rescue Hebrews (another "righteous Gentile" appears in 2.5-10). Their names, however, are Semitic. **16:** The killing of *boys* rather than *girls* reflects a patrilineal society. **17:** *Feared God*, better, revered God. **22:** Unable to rely on the midwives, the Pharaoh turns to all of the Egyptians to carry out his genocide.

2.1-22: The early life of Moses. **1-10:** Moses is born and adopted. **1:** *Levi*, the third son of Jacob (1.2). The parents' names are given in 6.20, Amram and Jochebed. **2-3:** *Saw that he was a fine baby*, lit. "saw that he was good," as in the creation story in Gen 1. The meaning here is "healthy." The *basket* occurs elsewhere only concerning Noah's ark (Gen 6-9). As Noah's ark rescued humankind, Moses' "ark" will rescue the future liberator of Israel. Since Moses will bring a new beginning, parallels with creation and flood are especially fitting. *The reeds* point ahead to the rescue of Israel at the Reed Sea (chs 14-15). **4:** The sister is elsewhere identified as Miriam in 15.20; Num 26.59. **6:** *Hebrews*, 1.15n. **10:** The name

EXODUS 2:11–3:23

she took him as her son. She named him Moses,^a “because,” she said, “I drew him out^b of the water.”

11 One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and saw their forced labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsfolk. 12 He looked this way and that, and seeing no one he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. 13 When he went out the next day, he saw two Hebrews fighting; and he said to the one who was in the wrong, “Why do you strike your fellow Hebrew?” 14 He answered, “Who made you a ruler and judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and thought, “Surely the thing is known.” 15 When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. 16 But Moses fled from Pharaoh. He settled in the land of Midian, and sat down by a well. 17 The priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came to draw water, and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock. 18 But some shepherds came and drove them away. Moses got up and came to their defense and watered their flock. 19 When they returned to their father Reuel,

he said, “How is it that you have come back so soon today?” 20 They said, “An Egyptian helped us against the shepherds; he even drew water for us and watered the flock.” 21 He said to his daughters, “Where is he? Why did you leave the man? Invite him to break bread.” 22 Moses agreed to stay with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah in marriage. 23 She bore a son, and he named him Gershom; for he said, “I have been an alien residing in a foreign land.” 24 After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. 25 God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 26 God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

3 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he

Moses, from an Egyptian word meaning “to beget a child” and perhaps once joined with the name of an Egyptian deity (cf. the name Thut-mose), is given a Hebrew etymology, “he who draws out”; as an adult Moses will live up to his name by drawing the Hebrews out of the Red Sea. 11–15a: Despite his Egyptian upbringing and appearance (vv. 10, 19), Moses identifies with his own people when he sees their suffering. His first attempt to help them fails, however, as both Hebrews and Pharaoh turn against him. 15b–22: Moses flees and marries. 15: Gen 25.2 identifies the Midianites as descendants of Abraham and Keturah, and thus relatives of Israel (contrast Judg 4.11). Their homeland was in northwestern Arabia (Map on p. 24 HB). 17: Having been rescued by the daughter of the Egyptian king, Moses now rescues the seven daughters of a Midianite priest. Zipporah (v. 21) will later return the favor (4.24–26). 18: Moses’ father-in-law (v. 21) is elsewhere called either Jethro (3.1; 4.18; 18.1) or Hobab (Judg 4.11), while Reuel is Zipporah’s grandfather (Num 10.29). 2, 23–4.17: God calls Moses. In Midian the God of Israel’s ancestors appears to Moses and summons him to take the lead in delivering Israel. 2:23–25: The transition to the next king does not improve conditions for the Israelites, but it will make possible Moses’ return to Egypt (4.19). Though it is not stated that the Israelites cry out to God, nonetheless God hears them and is moved to the first overt divine action on behalf of all the slaves (cf. 1.20–21). Israel’s cry will be echoed by Egypt’s “loud cry” at the end (11.6; 12.30). 24: Remembered, or “focused attention on.” Covenant, Gen 12.1–3; 17; 26.2–5. 3.1–6: God appears for the first time at Horeb (or Sinai). This theophany, or divine appearance, to Moses alone, prefigures the second, beginning in ch 19, to all Israel. 1: The mountain of God, called both Horeb (as here) and Sinai (19.11), is probably a Midianite sacred place. Its location is unknown, but three poems support the notion here that it is southeast of Israel rather than in what we now call the Sinai Peninsula (Deut 33.2; Judg 5.4; Hab 3.3, 7; see Midian on color Map 3 at end of book). 2: The angel (lit. “messen-

EXODUS 19.9–20.2

thing that the LORD has spoken we will do.” Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. ⁹Then the LORD said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after.”

When Moses had told the words of the people to the LORD, ¹⁰the LORD said to Moses: “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes ¹¹and prepare for the third day, because on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. ¹²You shall set limits for the people all around, saying, ‘Be careful not to go up the mountain or to touch the edge of it. Any who touch the mountain shall be put to death. ¹³No hand shall touch them, but they shall be stoned or shot with arrows;’ whether animal or human being, they shall not live.” When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they may go up on the mountain.” ¹⁴So Moses went down from the mountain to the people. He consecrated the people, and they washed their clothes. ¹⁵And he said to the people, “Prepare for the third day; do not go near a woman.”

¹⁶On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain; and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. ¹⁷Moses

brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the LORD had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. ¹⁹As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder. ²⁰When the LORD descended upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain, the LORD summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. ²¹Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people not to break through to the LORD to look; otherwise many of them will perish. ²²Even the priests who approach the LORD must consecrate themselves or the LORD will break out against them.” ²³Moses said to the LORD, “The people are not permitted to come up to Mount Sinai; for you yourself warned us, saying, ‘Set limits around the mountain and keep it holy.’” ²⁴The LORD said to him, “Go down, and come up bringing Aaron with you; but do not let either the priests or the people break through to come up to the LORD; otherwise he will break out against them.” ²⁵So Moses went down to the people and told them.

20 Then God spoke all these words:

² I am the LORD your God, who
a Heb lacks *with arrows*

God to the people and the people to God (20.19; 24.1–2; 34.27; Deut 5). **10–15:** In this paragraph, on the other hand, all the people are to prepare to take part in the covenant ceremony (24.3–8). **12–13:** These *limits* reflect the understanding of holiness as a mysterious, threatening power with which the mountain is charged (3.6n.; 2 Sam 6.6–9). No hand may touch the offender who has become affected with the contagion of holiness (Lev 6.27–28). **14–15:** Washing or changing of clothing (Gen 35.2) and sexual abstinence (1 Sam 21.4–6) are forms of ceremonial purification. *The people*, “... a woman,” the address betrays the narrator’s androcentric view: He equates the Israelite people with the men. Deut 31.12 offers a more inclusive view. **16–19:** The theophany, or divine appearance, is portrayed this time as a violent thunderstorm and earthquake (Judg 5.4–5; Ps 18.7–15; 29.3–9). **16:** The trumpet (v. 13) sounds on ritual occasions (2 Sam 6.15). **20–25:** The three zones of increasing holiness must be carefully respected: All Israel must remain at the foot of the mountain (vv. 12, 17), and the leaders may go up partway (24.1–2, 9–11), but only Moses may ascend to the top where God is (v. 20; 20.21). **20.1–17:** The Ten Commandments, the epitome of the covenant obligations toward God and neighbor (Deut 5.6–21). All are in unconditional and absolute (apodictic) second-person masculine singular form. **1:** *These words*; “the ten words” or the Decalogue (34.28; Deut 4.13; 10.4). “Words” is more suitable than commandments. Nowhere does the Bible establish how these ten should be enumerated, and there

brought you out of the land of Egypt; out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before^a me.

⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation^b of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

⁸Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁰But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in

them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

¹²Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³You shall not murder.^c

¹⁴You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵You shall not steal.

¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

¹⁸When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid^d and trembled and stood at a distance, ¹⁹and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die." ²⁰Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the

^a Or *besides* ^b Or *to thousands* ^c Or *kill*

^d Sam Gk Syr Vg: MT *they saw*

was a diversity of views on this already in antiquity. **2:** This self-identification summarizes the meaning of the Exodus, thereby setting command within the context of God's liberating action. In Jewish tradition this is the first "word." **3:** This "word," the first commandment in Christian tradition, does not deny the existence of other gods, but asserts that Israel shall acknowledge *no other gods* than the God who has liberated them (5.2n.; 12.12; 15.11). **4–6:** Imageless worship of God (20.23) distinguishes Israel's religion from those of its neighbors, where deities were typically depicted in animal or human form. Some consider vv. 3–6 as one commandment. **5:** A *jealous God* who will tolerate no rivals for Israel's devotion (34.14). **7:** A prohibition of the misuse of the divine *name* in magic, divination, or false swearing (Lev. 19.12). **8–11:** Keeping *the sabbath*, or seventh day of the week, *holy* means to observe it as a day separated from others, a segment of time belonging especially to God. Since v. 11 refers to the Priestly creation story (Gen 1.1–2.3), this version of the ten words is often called the Priestly Decalogue. **10:** 16.22–30n. Since the Ten Commandments are in the masculine singular and addressed to individual males, wives are absent here (contrast v. 12). **11:** Compare the reasons in 23.12; Deut. 5.15. **12:** In contrast to vv. 10 and 17, the woman is treated equally, precisely because she is a *mother* (21.15, 17; Deut. 27.16). **13:** This commandment forbids *murder*, not the forms of killing authorized for Israel, such as war and capital punishment. **15:** *Steal*, the same word is translated "kidnap" in 21.16. **17:** Some see two commandments here. However, *neighbor's house*, or household, introduces what is named in the second part of the verse: *wife, male or female slave*, etc. This final command shows most clearly that the commandments address the adult male.

20.18–21: The people request that Moses be the covenant mediator (19.9n.) so that they need not hear God's voice directly (Deut. 5.4–5). The fear of the people is interpreted positively in Deut. 5.22–23; 18.15–18, which view this as the beginning of institutionalized prophecy.

EXODUS 20.21-21.12

fear of him upon you so that you do not sin." ²¹Then the people stood at a distance, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

²² The LORD said to Moses: Thus you shall say to the Israelites: "You have seen for yourselves that I spoke with you from heaven. ²³You shall not make gods of silver alongside me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold. ²⁴You need make for me only an altar of earth and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your offerings of well-being, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you. ²⁵But if you make for me an altar of stone, do not build it of hewn stones; for if you use a chisel upon it you profane it. ²⁶You shall not go up by steps to my altar, so that your nakedness may not be exposed on it."

21 These are the ordinances that you shall set before them:

² When you buy a male Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, but in the seventh he shall go out a free person, without debt. ³If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife

shall go out with him. ⁴If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's and he shall go out alone. ⁵But if the slave declares, "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out a free person," ⁶then his master shall bring him before God. He shall be brought to the door or the doorpost; and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him for life.

⁷ When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. ⁸If she does not please her master, who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed; he shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt unfairly with her. ⁹If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter. ¹⁰If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish the food, clothing, or marital rights of the first wife. ¹¹And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out without debt, without payment of money.

¹² Whoever strikes a person mortally

a Or to the judges b Heb of her

20.22-23.19: The Covenant Collection, or Book of the Covenant (see 24.7). This legislation begins and ends with commands regarding ritual (20.22-26; 23.10-19), so that worship surrounds social legislation. The laws presuppose a settled agricultural society (22.5-6). They reflect Israelite life in Canaan, when laws of the surrounding culture were borrowed and adapted to the covenant tradition. Most scholars see this as the earliest of the biblical law collections.

20.22-26: Regulations for worship, in unconditional second-person style (like the Ten Commandments, 20.2-17), continued in 22.18-23.19. **22-23:** 20.4-6n.; Deut 4.15-40. **24-26:** On the types of offerings, see Lev 1; 3. The Israelite altar is to be built wherever I cause my name to be remembered, in other words, choose to reveal my presence. Contrast the reform of centralized worship demanded in Deut 12.5-14.

21.1-22.17: Case laws. **1:** Ordinances are laws formulated (usually in the third person) to deal with various cases (casuistic law), in contrast to unconditional laws such as the Ten Commandments. These case laws are similar in style and content to other legal codes of the ancient Near East.

21.2-11: The rights of slaves (cf. Deut 15.12-18; Lev 25.39-55). **2-6:** Male slaves. **2:** Hebrew may refer here to displaced persons generally (1.15n.), though even some Israelites will go into servitude because of debt and poverty (22.1; Lev 25.39; 2 Kings 4.1). **6:** The pierced ear will be a lifelong symbol of the slave's status. **7-11:** Female slaves sold because of their fathers' poverty and taken as wives. **8:** Redeemed by a relative who pays the purchase price. A foreign people; better, anyone outside her family of origin.

21.12-32: Laws protecting human beings. **12-17:** Capital offenses (22.18-20). **12-14:** A distinction between intentional and unintentional homicide. The asylum is at the altar (1 Kings 2.28-34), rather than at a city of refuge (Num 35.12; Deut 4.41-43; 19.1-13; Josh 20). **17:** Lev 20.9. The curse is understood

shall be put to death. ¹³If it was not premeditated, but came about by an act of God; then I will appoint for you a place to which the killer may flee. ¹⁴But if someone willfully attacks and kills another by treachery, you shall take the killer from my altar for execution.

15 Whoever strikes father or mother shall be put to death.

16 Whoever kidnaps a person, whether that person has been sold or is still held in possession, shall be put to death.

17 Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death.

18 When individuals quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or fist so that the injured party, though not dead, is confined to bed, ¹⁹but recovers and walks around outside with the help of a staff, then the assailant shall be free of liability, except to pay for the loss of time, and to arrange for full recovery.

20 When a slaveowner strikes a male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies immediately, the owner shall be punished. ²¹But if the slave survives a day or two, there is no punishment; for the slave is the owner's property.

22 When people who are fighting injure a pregnant woman so that there is a miscarriage, and yet no further harm follows, the one responsible shall be fined what the woman's husband demands, paying as much as the judges determine. ²³If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, ²⁴eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

26 When a slaveowner strikes the eye of a male or female slave, destroying it, the owner shall let the slave go, a free person,

to compensate for the eye. ²⁷If the owner knocks out a tooth of a male or female slave, the slave shall be let go, a free person, to compensate for the tooth.

28 When an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall not be liable. ²⁹If the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has been warned but has not restrained it, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death. ³⁰If a ransom is imposed on the owner, then the owner shall pay whatever is imposed for the redemption of the victim's life. ³¹If it gores a boy or a girl, the owner shall be dealt with according to this same rule. ³²If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall pay to the slaveowner thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

33 If someone leaves a pit open, or digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, ³⁴the owner of the pit shall make restitution, giving money to its owner, but keeping the dead animal.

35 If someone's ox hurts the ox of another, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide the price of it; and the dead animal they shall also divide. ³⁶But if it was known that the ox was accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has not restrained it, the owner shall restore ox for ox, but keep the dead animal.

22 When someone steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, the thief shall pay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.^a The thief shall

^a Ch 21.37 in Heb ^b Verses 2, 3, and 4 rearranged thus: 3b, 4, 2, 3a

to release an inexorable power (Num 22.6), thus making it as serious to curse parents as to strike them (v. 15). The verb can also mean "humiliate" or "treat with contempt," the opposite of what is commanded in 20.12. **22-25:** This "lex talionis," or "law of retaliation" (Lev 24.19-20) is not a warrant for unrestrained vengeance but precisely a limitation on revenge: Only the equivalent of the damage may be taken. **28-32:** The goring ox is used as a paradigmatic case here, as in other ancient Near Eastern legal collections, for indirect manslaughter and negligent homicide. Biblical law is more stringent than the laws of the surrounding societies.

21.33-22.17: Laws dealing with property and compensation. **21.33-36:** Responsibility in cases of negligence. **22.1-4:** Cases of stealing. **2-3:** These verses may mean that an intruder caught in the act at night

EXODUS 22.2-22.25

make restitution, but if unable to do so, shall be sold for the theft. ⁴When the animal, whether ox or donkey or sheep, is found alive in the thief's possession, the thief shall pay double.

²If a thief is found breaking in, and is beaten to death, no bloodguilt is incurred; ³but if it happens after sunrise, bloodguilt is incurred.

⁵When someone causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over, or lets livestock loose to graze in someone else's field, restitution shall be made from the best in the owner's field or vineyard.

⁶When fire breaks out and catches in thorns so that the stacked grain or the standing grain or the field is consumed, the one who started the fire shall make full restitution.

⁷When someone delivers to a neighbor money or goods for safekeeping, and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, then the thief, if caught, shall pay double. ⁸If the thief is not caught, the owner of the house shall be brought before God,^b to determine whether or not the owner had laid hands on the neighbor's goods.

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

¹⁰When someone delivers to another a donkey, ox, sheep, or any other animal for safekeeping, and it dies or is injured or is carried off, without anyone seeing it, ¹¹an oath before the LORD shall decide between the two of them that the one has not laid

hands on the property of the other; the owner shall accept the oath, and no restitution shall be made. ¹²But if it was stolen, restitution shall be made to its owner. ¹³If it was mangled by beasts, let it be brought as evidence; restitution shall not be made for the mangled remains.

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

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

¹⁸You shall not permit a female sorcerer to live.

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

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

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

²⁵If you lend money to my people, to

^a Ch 22.1 in Heb ^b Or before the judges

^c Or the judges condemn

may be killed with impunity, but not in broad daylight. **5-6:** More cases of negligence. **7-15:** Cases involving property entrusted to another. **8-9:** Before God, for an oracular decision or the sacred oath (v. 11; 1 Kings 8.31-32). **9:** Whom God condemns, alternatively, "whom the gods condemn," perhaps derived from pre-Israelite tradition. **16-17:** The case of consensual sexual relations with a virgin not promised to another is included here because it requires compensation for damage to property, the bride-price. Cf. Deut 22.13-30.

22.18-23.9: Social and religious commands, mostly in unconditional second-person style, continuing 20.22-26. **22.18-20:** Capital offenses (21.12-17). **20:** 20.3; Deut 13.12-18. **21-27:** In a society based on land ownership, patrilineality, and patriarchy, God is the protector of the legally and economically defenseless: resident aliens, widows, fatherless (orphan), and poor. **21:** Memory of the experience in Egypt creates empathy for aliens within Israel (23.9). **25:** Cf. Lev 25.35-38. **26-27:** A lender can keep a garment

the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them. ²⁶If you take your neighbor's cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; ²⁷for it may be your neighbor's only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep? And if your neighbor cries out to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴Three times in the year you shall hold a festival for me. ¹⁵You shall observe the festival of unleavened bread; as I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt.

No one shall appear before me empty-handed.

¹⁶You shall observe the festival of harvest, of the first fruits of your labor, of

a. Meaning of Heb uncertain.

as security only for the day, since a poor borrower needs it at night (Deut 24.12-13; Am 2.8). **28:** Lev 24.15-16; 2 Sam 16.9; 1 Kings 2.8-9; 21.10. **29-30:** 2.22-23n.; 13.1-2, 11-16, and notes. However, it is uncertain if the redemption of the firstborn is recognized here. **31:** Flesh torn by beasts is regarded as unclean, because it is not properly drained of blood (Lev 7.24; 17.15). **23.1-9:** Equal justice for all. **1-3:** 20.16. **4-5:** Justice extends even to helping your enemy (contrast Deut 22.1-4). **9:** 22.21. **23.10-19:** A ritual calendar (34.18-24; Lev 23; Deut 16.1-17) concludes the Covenant Collection, so that social laws are framed by worship (20.22-26). **10-11:** Fallow land (Lev 25.2-7). The land, the poor, and wild animals are all objects of concern. **12:** Here the observance of the seventh day, not here called the sabbath, is based upon concern for the needs of exploitable humans and animals (cf. 20.11; 16.22-30n.; Deut 5.14-15). **13:** 20.3. **14-17:** Three annual pilgrimage festivals to a major sanctuary (1 Sam 1.3, 21). **15:** Unleavened bread, 12.14-20n.; 13.3-10. **Abib,** 13.4n. **Empty-handed,** without a sacrificial offering. **16:** The festival of harvest, later called Shavuot, the festival of weeks, or Pentecost, celebrated in May-

EXODUS 23.17-24.2

what you sow in the field. You shall observe the festival of ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor. 17 Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord God.

18 You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the fat of my festival remain until the morning.

19 The choicest of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.

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

20 I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. 21 Be attentive to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel against him; for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him.

22 But if you listen attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes.

23 When my angel goes in front of you, and brings you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, 24 you shall not bow down to their gods; or worship them, or follow their practices; but you shall utterly demolish them and break their pillars in pieces. 25 You shall worship the LORD your God, and I will bless your

bread and your water; and I will take sickness away from among you. 26 No one shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. 27 I will send my terror in front of you, and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. 28 And I will send the pestilence^b in front of you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you. 29 I will not drive them out from before you in one year, or the land would become desolate and the wild animals would multiply against you. 30 Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land. 31 I will set your borders from the Red Sea^c to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates; for I will hand over to you the inhabitants of the land, and you shall drive them out before you. 32 You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. 33 They shall not live in your land, or they will make you sin against me; for if you worship their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.

24 Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship at a distance. 2 Moses

a Gk Vg: Heb *hē* b Or hornets: Meaning of Heb uncertain c Or Sea of Reeds

June at the time of the wheat harvest (19.1n.; Lev 23.15-21; Deut 16.9-12). The third festival, *the festival of ingathering*, later called Sukkot, the festival of booths (Lev 23.33-43; Deut 16.13-15), celebrated at the end of the year (autumn), according to the old agricultural calendar (12.2n.), when fruit, grapes, and olives are harvested. 17: Women and young children are not obligated to make the pilgrimage. They do make the pilgrimage, however, in 1 Sam 1; 2.19; cf. Ex 10.9. 18-19: 34.25-26. *Fat*, see Lev 3.3-4. The ancient meaning of the prohibition against boiling a kid in its mother's milk (Deut 14.21) is disputed.

23.20-33: The divine warrior will conquer the promised land for Israel, and in return Israel is to keep separate from other peoples and their gods (Deut 7). 20-21: The angel represents God's own presence (14.19). 23,28: 3.8n. 25-26: 15.26. 27-28: *Terror* (Gen 35.5; Josh 10.10) and *pestilence* (Deut 7.20) are frequent weapons of "holy war." 31: *Red Sea*, the Gulf of Eilat/Aqaba, the eastern arm of the Red Sea; *sea of the Philistines*, the Mediterranean; *the wilderness*, the desert south of Israel. For these boundaries, cf. Gen 15.18; Deut 11.24.

24.1-11: The covenant is ratified in two ceremonies: a theophany (the third divine appearance of the book) and sacred meal for a chosen few (vv. 1-2,9-11), and a ritual of blood for all Israel (vv. 3-8). This chapter too is an amalgam of traditions. 1-2: This part of the story continues in vv. 9-11. 2: *Moses alone* an indication of Moses' special role as covenant mediator (19.9; 20.19). 3-8: This ceremony stresses the

alone shall come near the LORD; but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him."

3 Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do." 4 And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and set up twelve pillars, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 He sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed oxen as offerings of well-being to the LORD. 6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he dashed against the altar. 7 Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." 8 Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said, "See the blood of the covenant that

the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, 10 and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. 11 God did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; also they beheld God, and they ate and drank.

12 The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." 13 So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. 14 To the elders he had said, "Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them."

a Heb He

participation of all Israel (19.10-15). The *twelve pillars*, one for each tribe, symbolize Israel, while the *altar* represents God's presence. Since *blood* stands for life (and therefore death), throwing half the blood on the altar and half on the people obligates both parties to keep their side of the obligations of the covenant on pain of death (cf. Gen 15). Israel enters into the covenant knowing the conditions and willingly accepting them (vv. 3,7). 3: *The words*, the Ten Commandments (20.1). *The ordinances*, the case laws of the Covenant Collection (21.1n.). 5: On the types of *offerings*, see Lev 1; 3. 7: *The book of the covenant* (Josh 24.25-26) contains the covenant laws, and here is implicitly identified with "the words" and "the ordinances" (v. 3). 9-11: In this ceremony (continuing vv. 1-2), the chosen few see God and eat a sacred meal. 9: The people do not take part in this theophany (contrast 19.16-19; 20.18-21), but are represented by the seventy *elders* or chief men (4.29). *Moses*, the covenant mediator, is accompanied by the priestly family, *Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu* (6.23; Lev 10.1-3). 10-11: The description of the leaders' experience is extremely unusual; they actually see God and yet remain unharmed (contrast 3.6; 19.21; 33.18-23).

24.12-31.18: Instructions for worship. Now that the covenant has established a long-term relationship between the God of Sinai and the people of Israel, God tells Moses what must be done so that both parties can leave the mountain and travel together to the promised land. There must be a portable shrine ("tabernacle") and priests to officiate. The detailed instructions of chs 25-31 will be carried out in chs 35-40. This extensive material reflects the importance of building a physical house for God, ensuring God's presence among Israel.

24.12-18: Moses meets God on the mountain. Moses goes alone *up on the mountain* to meet God for *forty days and forty nights*. Moses' ascent and the theophany (vv. 15-18) introduce the Priestly instructions of chs 25-31, and his prolonged absence from the people, leaving Aaron in charge (vv. 14,18), sets the stage for the episode of the golden calf in ch 32. 12: According to the first and last verses of this section (24.12 and 31.18), it is God who has written *the law and the commandment* on *tablets of stone* (32.15-19; 34.1,4,28-29; Deut 9.9-11; contrast Ex 24.4). 13: *Joshua* appears for the second time (17.9). 14: *Hur* appears for the second and final time (17.10). 15-18: This fourth theophany, or divine appear-

EXODUS 24.15-25.9

15 Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. 17 Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. 18 Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

25 The LORD said to Moses: ²Tell the Israelites to take for me an offering;

from all whose hearts prompt them to give you shall receive the offering for me. ³This is the offering that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, ⁴blue, purple, and crimson yarns and fine linen, goats' hair, ⁵tanned rams' skins, fine leather, ⁶acacia wood, ⁷oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, ⁸onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and for the breastpiece. ⁹And have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them. ¹⁰In accordance

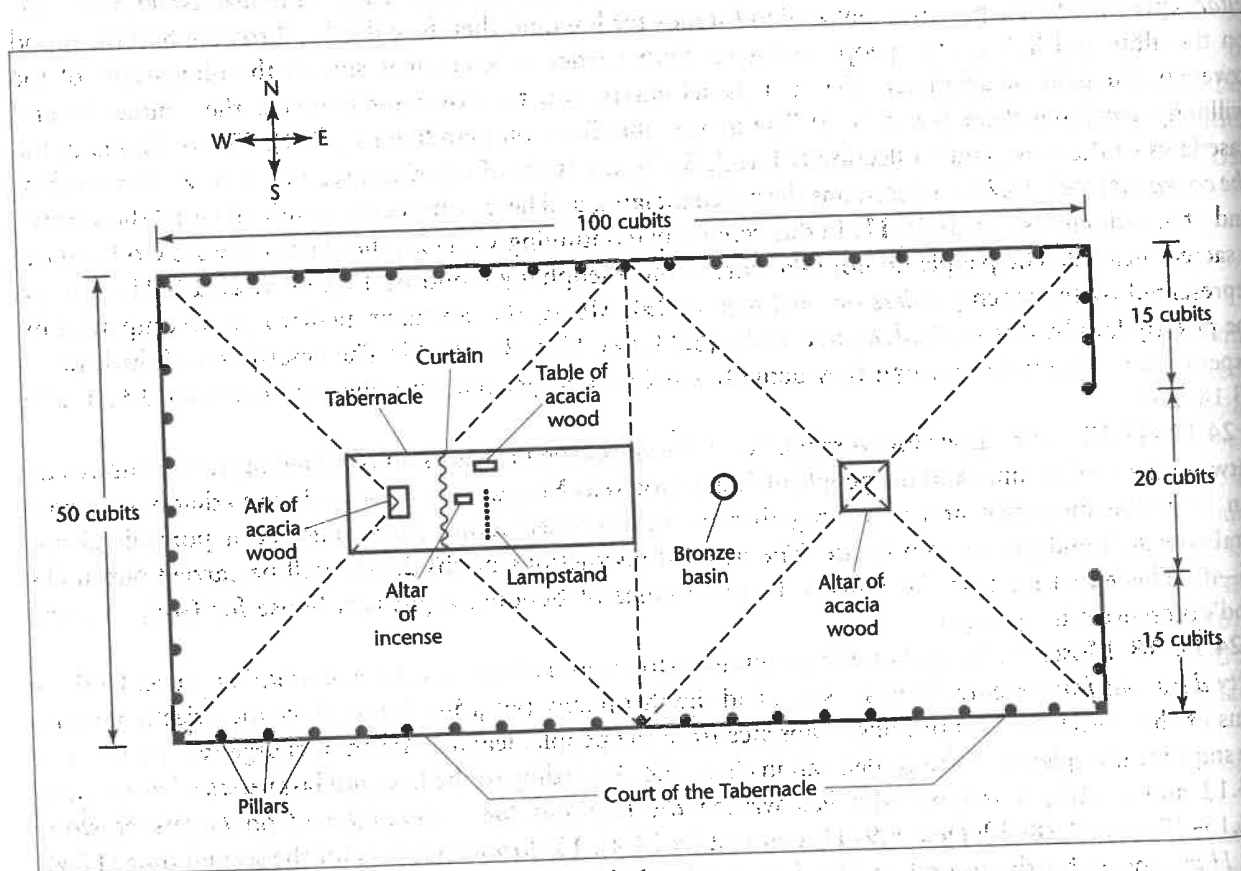
^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

ance (19.16-19), follows the pattern of *six days* and a *seventh*, which began in ch 16. *The glory*, 16.6-7n.

25.1-27.21: The tabernacle and its furnishings (See Diagram below). The Israelites are to build a portable shrine so that God can leave Mount Sinai to travel with them and live among them. Like Mount Sinai (19.20-25n.), the shrine will have three carefully delimited zones of descending holiness. In these chapters the instructions move from the most holy place through the holy place to the surrounding court. The metals used will mark the level of holiness.

25.1-40: The offering, the ark, the table, and the lampstand. The three items described in this chapter, destined for the most holy place and the holy place, are made of or overlaid with gold.

25.1-9: A voluntary offering will supply the materials to make the tabernacle and its equipment (3.21-22n.; 35.4-29; 36.2-7). **7:** *Ephod* and *breastpiece*, 28.6-30n. **8-9:** The Israelites must make the



Chs 25-31; 36-39: The structure of the Tabernacle.

DEUTERONOMY



Deuteronomy directly addresses the problem of the historical distance between past and present, between tradition and the needs of the contemporary generation, between revelation and interpretation. In that way, it is a remarkably modern text that instructs its audience how to become more thoughtful readers of scripture. In narrative terms, Deuteronomy comes just as the Israelites, encamped on the plains of Moab, finally stand poised to enter the promised land. This entry into Canaan would provide the long-awaited climax of the story that had begun with the promises to the ancestors in Genesis, and whose fulfillment had been delayed by the enslavement in Egypt and the wandering in the wilderness. Now, on the eve both of his death and of the nation's entry into the land without him, Moses, as Deuteronomy's speaker, arrests the narrative action in order to deliver a series of three speeches, grouped together as a long farewell address. He reviews the nation's history, expounds upon their laws, and instructs them about the importance of loyalty to God. He also requires that the nation swear upon oath to uphold this combination of law and theological instruction as a covenant upon the plains of Moab, one that supplements the prior covenant of Horeb (Deuteronomy's name for Sinai; 29.1). Only after the conclusion of these discourses and a following appendix (chs 31–34) does the overall narrative line resume with the account of the nation's entry into Canaan in the books of Joshua and Judges.

The English name of the book comes from the ancient Greek translation, the Septuagint, and means "second law" (see 17.18n.). That title reflects the early Jewish perspective that Deuteronomy is Moses' rehearsal of the earlier legal sections of the Torah. Despite this perspective and the text's own self-presentation, however, Deuteronomy is likely not Mosaic but originates in the seventh century BCE. It has long been recognized that there are striking similarities between the distinctive religious and legal requirements of Deuteronomy and the account of the major religious reform carried out by Josiah, the king of Judah, in 622 BCE (2 Kings 22–23). That reform had been inspired by the discovery in the Temple of a "scroll of the Torah" (2 Kings 22.8). Josiah's reform restricted all sacrificial worship of God to Jerusalem and removed foreign elements from the system of worship; it culminated in the celebration of the first nationally centralized Passover at the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Kings 23.21–23). So strongly do these royal initiatives correspond to the distinctive requirements of Deuteronomy that scholars, both traditional and critical, have long identified the "scroll of the Torah" discovered in Josiah's Temple as Deuteronomy.

Josiah's reform, with Deuteronomy as its catalyst, was much more a revolution than a simple return to older forms of worship. Previously, it was entirely legitimate to sacrifice to God throughout the land, as did Abraham at Shechem and near Bethel (Gen 12.7–8); Jacob at Bethel (Gen 35.1–7); Samuel at Mizpah, Ramah, Gilgal, and Bethlehem (1 Sam 7.9, 17; 9.11–14; 10.8; 16.1–5); and Elijah upon Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18.20–46). Indeed, earlier biblical law stipulated that God would grant blessing "in every place where I cause my name to be remembered" (Ex 20.24). Deuteronomy challenged that older norm, prohibiting sacrifice "at any place" (literally, "in every place") and restricting it to a single site, implicitly Jerusalem (Deut 12.13–14). In this way, Deuteronomy's self-presentation as a rehearsal or explication of prior law (1.1–5) or as a simple supplement to the prior

covenant (29.1) obscures the extent to which Deuteronomy actually challenges and revises earlier law in support of its new religious vision.

A century of Assyrian imperial domination serves as the historical background of Josiah's reforms. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had fallen to the Assyrians in 722 BCE (2 Kings 17). Continuing Assyrian incursions down the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean had all but reduced Judah to a rump-state (2 Kings 18.13). In a desperate bid to preserve the nation's autonomy, King Hezekiah of Judah made a pact with Assyria (2 Kings 18.13–18), as had his predecessor Ahaz (2 Kings 16.7–8). The resulting military allegiances led to religious syncretism, as foreign forms of worship were introduced into the Temple (2 Kings 16.10–20; 21.1–6).

By the last quarter of the seventh century BCE, however, Assyria's might was in decline. In this context, Josiah's religious reforms represented an important bid for Judean cultural, political, and religious autonomy. The monarch extended his reforms into the area of the former Northern Kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 23.15–20), territory formerly under Assyrian control. Deuteronomy, apparently written sometime during this historical crisis, likewise reflects the desire to preserve Judean cultural and religious integrity. Its authors were convinced that older conventions of worship and social organization were no longer viable. If the religion of the LORD was to survive the crisis, renewal and adaptation were necessary. The collection of laws that form the core of Deuteronomy (chs 12–26) provides a remarkably comprehensive program for cultural renewal. The laws deal with worship; the festival calendar; the major institutions of public life (justice, kingship, priesthood, prophecy); criminal, family, and civil law; and ethics. These laws are presented as the requirements of a covenant between God and the nation, which the people take an oath to uphold, upon penalty of sanctions, while maintaining unconditional loyalty to their God. That covenant structure closely corresponds to Neo-Assyrian state treaties that have been recovered from this period, the most famous of which is the *Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon* (672 BCE). At a number of points, the authors of Deuteronomy seem consciously to have patterned their covenant after such treaties, treaties that had been repeatedly imposed upon Judah in the late eighth and seventh centuries. From this perspective, Deuteronomy is a counter-treaty: Its authors turned the weapon of imperialism into a bid for freedom, shifting its oath of loyalty from the Assyrian overlord to their divine sovereign.

The authors of Deuteronomy were thus tutored in international treaty conventions, and elsewhere reveal their knowledge of the literary traditions of ancient Near Eastern law (see 15.1–18n.; 17.8–13n., 14–20n.; 22.13–30n.) and wisdom literature (1.13n.; 4.2n.). The authors of Deuteronomy made use of another common ancient Near Eastern convention as well. They did not directly attach their name to their composition or write in their own voice; instead, they attributed their composition to a prestigious figure from the past. By employing Moses as their spokesperson, they established a link with tradition at precisely the time when tradition, for the sake of survival, had to be transformed. This convention of ascribing a text to an ancient personage, technically called "pseudepigraphy," is particularly well known in the later literature of the Second Temple period; examples include *Jubilees*, 4 *Ezra*, the *Testament of Abraham*, and (among the Dead Sea Scrolls) the *Temple Scroll*.

It is important to note that Deuteronomy has its own internal literary history as well, preserving several layers of tradition within itself: The structure of three different speeches given by Moses, with an appendix, already suggests a process of literary growth. That growth is closely connected to the gradual formation of the Hebrew Bible. To appreciate what is involved, it helps imaginatively to turn the clock back to the time before the Bible achieved its present form.

When Deuteronomy was first promulgated, it would not have been part of any larger whole. Instead, it would have been complete by itself as a "scroll of the Torah" (i.e., the "book of the law" in 2 Kings 22.8). It would have consisted of most of the laws of chs 12–26, framed by a relatively sim-

[Introduction to Deuteronomy]

ple introduction and conclusion. This form of Deuteronomy presented itself as a treaty concluded between the nation and its God in a formal ceremony whereby each citizen took an oath of loyalty under penalty of strict sanctions (28.1–46). This was very likely the preexilic form of Deuteronomy.

At a later stage, presumably sometime during the exile in the mid-sixth century BCE, Deuteronomy would have been incorporated into the Deuteronomistic History (the books of Joshua through 2 Kings) to serve as its introduction. At this point, the Deuteronomistic editors would have given the book its literary frame (1.1–4.40; chs 31–34), while also adding to the collection of laws, selectively tying its promises or expectations to the later historical material. Expansions in Deuteronomy that reflect the Babylonian exile may derive from this stage (see 4.25–31; 28.47–56; 30.1–10).

At a still later point, in the exilic or postexilic period, Priestly editors appended Deuteronomy to the newly formed Pentateuch, to serve as its conclusion. Ironically, the decision to conclude the Pentateuch with Deuteronomy separated the overall narrative plan of Genesis through Numbers from its logical fulfillment in an account of the conquest of the land. This narrative climax was delayed to the books of Joshua and Judges.

In the final chapters of Deuteronomy, these three viewpoints operate simultaneously, creating a complex interplay of perspectives. The legal section is brought to its conclusion with a formal ratification ceremony involving the swearing of an oath to assume the penalties for transgressing the covenant (chs 29–31). At the same time, other editors worked to embed Deuteronomy in the Deuteronomistic History. Still other editors tied the book to Genesis–Numbers and thus make the creation of Torah—no longer the occupation of the land—the climax of the newly created Pentateuch. The three perspectives operate concurrently, spinning like Ezekiel's vision of “a wheel within a wheel” (1:16).

Part of the continuing relevance of Deuteronomy is that it does not permit itself to be read literally or passively. It challenges its readers actively to confront the problem of the relation between revelation and interpretation and breaks down conventional boundaries between scripture and tradition. It makes paradox central to its structure. The book distinctively narrates the process of its own formation (31.1–12) while also anticipating its existence and completion (17.18; 28.58; 30.10). Interpretation is directly and indirectly a theme of Deuteronomy (see 1.5). At many points, the authors of Deuteronomy reinterpret earlier narratives (see 6.1n.) and laws (particularly from the Covenant Collection or Covenant Code in Ex 20–23). Moreover, the process of the book's editing intentionally preserves conflicting perspectives on a full range of issues central to Israelite religion: on whether the revelation of the Decalogue at Mount Horeb (Deuteronomy's name for Mount Sinai) was direct or required the mediation of Moses (5.5n.); on the stature of Moses relative to other prophets (34.10n.); on the nature of divine punishment for sin (5.9–10n.; 7.10n.); on whether God rules as head of a pantheon or is the only God who exists (4.7–8n., 15–31n., 35n.; 32.8n.); and even on Deuteronomy's own setting in time and place (1.1n.; 2.12n.; 3.11n.). These mutually exclusive positions preserve an ongoing ancient debate about fundamental religious assumptions. The editors of Deuteronomy opted against closure. They preserved these different schools of thought in their full integrity. Accordingly, there is in Deuteronomy no access to God in the covenant without entering into this debate. The modern reader of Deuteronomy must become, like the authors of Deuteronomy, an interpreter.

DEUTERONOMY 3.17-4.2

boundary of the Ammonites; 17 the Arabah also, with the Jordan and its banks, from Chinnereth down to the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea,^a with the lower slopes of Pisgah on the east.

18 At that time, I charged you as follows: "Although the LORD your God has given you this land to occupy, all your troops shall cross over armed as the vanguard of your Israelite kin. 19 Only your wives, your children, and your livestock—I know that you have much livestock—shall stay behind in the towns that I have given to you. 20 When the LORD gives rest to your kindred, as to you, and they too have occupied the land that the LORD your God is giving them beyond the Jordan, then each of you may return to the property that I have given to you." 21 And I charged Joshua as well at that time, saying: "Your own eyes have seen everything that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so the LORD will do to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross. 22 Do not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who fights for you."

23 At that time, too, I entreated the LORD, saying: 24 "O Lord God, you have only begun to show your servant your

greatness and your might; what god in heaven or on earth can perform deeds and mighty acts like yours! 25 Let me cross over to see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and the Lebanon."

26 But the LORD was angry with me on your account and would not heed me. The LORD said to me, "Enough from you! Never speak to me of this matter again! 27 Go up to the top of Pisgah and look around you to the west, to the north, to the south, and to the east. Look well, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. 28 But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, because it is he who shall cross over at the head of this people and who shall secure their possession of the land that you will see." 29 So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor.

4 So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. 2 You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God with which I am charging you.

^a Heb Salt Sea

of the Jordan Valley or Arabah. 22: The whole story of the Exodus, wilderness journey, and invasion of Canaan is governed by the convictions of holy war, whereby God is a divine warrior who engages in battle on behalf of Israel. 23-29: Num 27.12-23. 24: *What god . . . can perform*, the assertion of God's superior power, relative to other gods in heaven, assumes the existence of other gods (5.7n.; 6.4n.; 32.8n.; Ex 15.11; Ps 89.5-8). For the later perspective of monotheism, see 4.35n. 26: See 1.37n. 27: Mount Pisgah, see 34.1n.

4.1-40: Exhortation to obey the Torah. While preceding the Decalogue (5.6-21), this unit provides a later theological reflection upon it, focusing on the second commandment and broadening its significance. Admonitions to obedience (vv. 1,40) frame the unit, which systematically contrasts obedience (vv. 5-24)/disobedience (vv. 25-31); remembering/forgetting (vv. 9,23); the LORD/other gods (vv. 7,34); Israel's revealed Torah/the laws of other nations (vv. 8,28); and God/idols (vv. 12-20). The correct worship of God is aniconic: Images (whether of God or of natural phenomena) should play no role in Israelite religion. This becomes so strong a theme that idolatry by itself is asserted to be the cause of the nation's exile from its land (vv. 25-31). The explicit reference to exile suggests that the unit is a late theological explanation for the Babylonian exile. The focus on idolatry as the basis for the divine punishment diverges significantly from the perspective elsewhere that views failure to heed "all his [God's] commandments and decrees" as the cause of exile (28.15; cf. 28.1,45,58-59). 1-4: The incident at Peor (Num 25.1-9) is recalled to emphasize the importance of fidelity to God and the dire consequences of worshipping other gods. 2: This admonition not to alter the Torah, whether by addition or subtraction (cf. 12.32), parallels similar admonitions in wisdom literature (Prov 30.6; Eccl 3.14; 12.12-13; Sir 42.21; cf. Rev 22.18-19) and in ancient Near Eastern legal traditions. 5-8: The author here challenges the

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3 You have seen for yourselves what the LORD did with regard to the Baal of Peor—how the LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, 4 while those of you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive today.

5 See, just as the LORD my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy.

6 You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" 7 For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him? 8 And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

9 But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip

from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children— 10 how you once stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, "Assemble the people for me, and I will let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me as long as they live on the earth, and may teach their children so"; 11 you approached and stood at the foot of the mountain while the mountain was blazing up to the very heavens, shrouded in dark clouds. 12 Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. 13 He declared to you his covenant, which he charged you to observe, that is, the ten commandments; and he wrote them on two stone tablets. 14 And the LORD charged me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy.

a Heb the ten words

prevailing Near Eastern idea that wisdom was a royal prerogative. Whereas, for example, the ancient Babylonian *Laws of Hammurabi* (ca. 1755 BCE) praised the "just decisions" of its "wise" king (cols 47.1; 4.7), here it is the nation Israel who will be internationally renowned as "wise" for its "just" laws (vv. 6,8). See also 29.29n.; 30.11–14n. 7–8: Israel is distinguished both by its God and by its law. The two ideas are interlocked. God is *near*, both in having entered history on behalf of Israel and in revealing his will as Torah (30.14). The laws are *just* (better, "righteous"); not only in their morality but also as embodying the will of God. 9–14: The revelation at Sinai/Horeb (Ex 19–20; Deut 5) is recalled in order to instruct this generation, who did not experience it. 9: The paired injunctions not to *forget* the powerful experience of God's actions and to educate *your children*, so that the past becomes "present" also to them, represent a prominent aim of Deuteronomy: to overcome the distance of the past and maintain it as a source of identity (vv. 23,25; 6.2,7; 20–25; 8.11; 9.7; 31.13; 32.18). *Your eyes have seen*, as well as the following "how you once stood" (v. 10), are highly paradoxical assertions. Neither is literally true. The actual generation of the Exodus had died off (2.14–15n.). This paradoxical structure of thought, whereby Moses addresses those who had not witnessed the events as if they had, while insisting that they inculcate the events to posterity, is central to Deuteronomy's theology of history (5.3–4,23; 11.7; 29.16–17). 10: *My words*, the Decalogue ("ten commandments"; v. 13; 5.22; 9.10; 10.2,4). Elsewhere, however, the phrase refers comprehensively to the legal corpus of chs 12–26 (12.28). *Fear*, respectful reverence, not intimidation (see Job 28.28; Prov 1.7). 11: The manifestation of a god ("theophany") was often associated with disturbances of nature in Ugaritic (Canaanite) literature. This motif was taken over by Israelite writers and applied to God (Ex 19.16–19; 20.21; Ps 18.7–15; 29.3–9). 12: *Form* (also vv. 15–16,23,25), directly alluding to the second commandment of the Decalogue (5.8 = Ex 20.4). 13: A subtle reinterpretation of Sinai: The specification of that event as one where God proclaimed *ten commandments* occurs only here, at 10.4; and at Ex 34.28. There is no special number or name for the commandments (lit. "words") in Ex 19–20 or Deut 5. The rationale for *two stone tablets* (as at 5.22) derives from ancient Near Eastern treaties, whereby both sovereign and vassal would retain a separate complete copy of the treaty. 15–31: Reinterpretation of the second commandment. The Decalogue concedes the existence of

DEUTERONOMY 4.15-4.31

15 Since you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, take care and watch yourselves closely, 16 so that you do not act corruptly by making an idol for yourselves, in the form of any figure—the likeness of male or female, 17 the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, 18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. 19 And when you look up to the heavens and see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, do not be led astray and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples everywhere under heaven. 20 But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron-smelter, out of Egypt, to become a people of his very own possession, as you are now.

21 The LORD was angry with me because of you, and he vowed that I should not cross the Jordan and that I should not enter the good land that the LORD your God is giving for your possession. 22 For I am going to die in this land without crossing over the Jordan, but you are going to cross over to take possession of that good land. 23 So be careful not to forget the covenant that the LORD your God made with

you, and not to make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. 24 For the LORD your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God.

25 When you have had children and children's children, and become complacent in the land, if you act corruptly by making an idol in the form of anything, thus doing what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, and provoking him to anger, 26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to occupy; you will not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. 27 The LORD will scatter you among the peoples; only a few of you will be left among the nations where the LORD will lead you. 28 There you will serve other gods made by human hands, objects of wood and stone that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. 29 From there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul. 30 In your distress, when all these things have happened to you in time to come, you will return to the LORD your God and heed him. 31 Because the LORD your God is a merciful God, he will neither abandon you nor destroy you; he will not

other gods, while prohibiting Israel from worshiping them (5.7; cf. 32.8; Ex 15.11; Ps 82.1). It then separately prohibits the making of images (5.8). The distinction between those two commandments is dissolved here. The existence of other gods is no longer conceivable; the sole focus is the prohibition against idols. Here and elsewhere (see v. 19n.) key ideas in Deuteronomy are reinterpreted from a later theological perspective; such passages therefore represent a later textual layer that dates to the exilic period. **16b-19a:** This catalogue follows the order of creation in Gen 1 in reverse order, consistent with ancient scribal practice when quoting an earlier text. **18:** *Water under the earth*, seas, rivers, and lakes. Ancient cosmology conceived the earth to be a disk floating on such waters (cf. Gen 1.9). **19:** *Sun . . . host of heaven* may reflect images derived from the Neo-Assyrian pantheon brought into the Jerusalem Temple by Manasseh but removed by Josiah (2 Kings 21.5; 23.4-5; Jer 8.2). The idea of idols or of celestial phenomena literally being worshiped sharply distorts ancient Near Eastern religion, which regarded such phenomena as visible manifestations or emblems of a deity, not as themselves divine. This polemic, with the idea that God *allotted* the celestial phenomena to other nations while reserving Israel as "his very own possession" (v. 20; cf. 7.6n.), reinterprets the earlier idea that God, as head of the pantheon, assigned other nations to the supervision of lesser gods but retained Israel as "his allotted share" (lit. "his very own possession"; 32.8-9). The author de-animates those gods, reducing them to lifeless celestial objects. **21:** See 1.37n. **26:** *Heaven . . . witness*, similarly, 30.19; 31.28; 32.1; Isa 1.2; 44.23; Ps 69.34; 96.11. **27-28:** These verses allude to the exile of conquered populations, a policy used effectively by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. **32-40:** Continuation of the double focus on the uniqueness of God's revelation to Israel

forget the covenant with your ancestors that he swore to them.

32 For ask now about former ages, long before your own, ever since the day that God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of heaven to the other: has anything so great as this ever happened or has its like ever been heard of? 33 Has any people ever heard the voice of a god speaking out of a fire, as you have heard, and lived? 34 Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by terrifying displays of power, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? 35 To you it was shown so that you would acknowledge that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him. 36 From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, while you heard his words coming out of the fire. 37 And because he loved your ancestors, he chose their descendants after them. He brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power, 38 driving out before you nations greater and mightier than yourselves, to bring you in, giving you their land for a possession, as it is still today. 39 So acknowledge today and take to heart that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. 40 Keep his statutes and his commandments, which I am commanding you today for your own well-being and that of

your descendants after you, so that you may long remain in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time.

41 Then Moses set apart on the east side of the Jordan three cities ⁴²to which a homicide could flee, someone who unintentionally kills another person, the two not having been at enmity before; the homicide could flee to one of these cities and live: ⁴³Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland belonging to the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead belonging to the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan belonging to the Manassites.

44 This is the law that Moses set before the Israelites. ⁴⁵These are the decrees and the statutes and ordinances that Moses spoke to the Israelites when they had come out of Egypt, ⁴⁶beyond the Jordan in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned at Heshbon, whom Moses and the Israelites defeated when they came out of Egypt. ⁴⁷They occupied his land and the land of King Og of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites on the eastern side of the Jordan: ⁴⁸from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, as far as Mount Sirion^a (that is, Hermon), ⁴⁹together with all the Arabah on the east side of the Jordan as far as the Sea of the Arabah, under the slopes of Pisgah.

5 Moses convened all Israel, and said to them:

^a Syr: Heb *Sion*

and of the covenant he made with the nation. Several passages fit best in the historical context of the Babylonian exile (see v. 35n.). 33: Alludes to the normal expectation that no human can look directly upon God and survive (Gen 16.13; 32.30; Ex 3.6; 19.21; 33.20). 34: *Attempted*, better, "ventured" (as at 28.56). *Trials . . . wonders* refers to the signs performed by Moses and Aaron in Egypt, including the plagues, to persuade Pharaoh to release Israel (Ex 7.3; 8.23; 10.1-2; 11.9-10). 35: *There is no other*, this affirmation of full monotheism (contrast v. 7; 5.7) corresponds to the thought of the exilic Second Isaiah (Isa 43.10-13; 44.6-8; 45.6-7,22).

4.41-43: An appendix. The cities of refuge to be established in Transjordan. Since the law concerned with these cities (ch 19) does not refer to this passage, these verses are most likely an editorial appendix composed after the completion of ch 19 (cf. Num 35.9-15; Josh 20.8). Similar disconnected appendices often appear in the Bible at the conclusion of longer literary units (e.g., Lev 27).

4.44-28.68: The second discourse of Moses.

4.44-49: Introduction. Cf. 1.1-5. 49: *Sea of the Arabah*, the Dead Sea.

5.1-33: The revelation at Sinai/Horeb. Ostensibly a retelling of Ex 19-20, this version introduces

DEUTERONOMY 5.2-5.12

Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall learn them and observe them diligently. ²The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. ³Not with our ancestors did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today. ⁴The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the fire. ⁵(At that time I was standing between the LORD and you to declare to you the words^a of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

⁶I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ⁷you shall have no other gods before^b me.

⁸You shall not make for yourself an

idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁹You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, ¹⁰but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation^c of those who love me and keep my commandments.

¹¹You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

¹²Observe the sabbath day and keep it

^a Q Mss Sam Gk Syr Vg Tg: MT *word*

^b Or *besides*

^c Or *to thousands*

significant changes in both detail and theology. The central idea is that God publicly reveals the law to the entire nation across boundaries of gender, race, and class, including non-Israelites (Ex 12.38). Near Eastern legal collections, in contrast, were attributed to a human monarch and were concerned to preserve class distinctions. Moreover, a deity disclosing himself to an entire nation was unprecedented. The Decalogue has God address each Israelite individually as a grammatically masculine singular "you," rather than the expected plural. In contrast to Near Eastern law, the prohibitions are universal and absolute. The aim of the law is to transform society by creating a moral community in which murder, theft, etc. will no longer exist. Obedience to God's will (vv. 6-16) demands active respect for the integrity of the neighbor (vv. 17-21). The editing drives home the point that there is no access to God or revelation without mediation and interpretation (vv. 5, 28-32), preserving two mutually independent viewpoints about whether God spoke directly to the people (v. 4) or only through the mediation of Moses (v. 5n.). Similarly, the editing retains a debate about the terror involved in hearing directly the divine voice (vv. 24-25):

5.1-5: Making the past present. **3:** *Not with our ancestors . . . but with us*, inconsistent with the earlier emphasis that the generation who experienced these events has now died off (2.14-15). The aim is to overcome the limits of historical time and place through participation in the covenant, which makes revelation "present" (see 4.9n.; 29.14-15n.). *Our ancestors* may refer either to the Exodus generation (2.14-15n.) or to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (1.11n.). **5:** NRSV suggests that the first sentence intends merely to clarify v. 4. More likely, it presents an independent view that challenges the assumption of v. 4. *I was standing between . . . you*, contrast "face to face" (v. 4). *You . . . did not go up the mountain*, contradicting v. 4, "with you . . . at the mountain" (Heb). *And he said*, in Hebrew, the original transition from the end of v. 4 directly to the Decalogue.

5.6-21: The Decalogue. This version differs at several points from that in Ex 20.2-17. **7-10:** See 4.15-31n. **9:** Punishment for sins against God extends across three generations. This principle of vicarious punishment contrasts sharply with the Israelite norm for civil and criminal law, which restricts punishment to the agent alone (24.16). Later layers of tradition challenged this theological principle of divine justice (see 7.10n.; Jer 31.29-30; Ezek 18). **10:** *Steadfast love* or "grace," loyalty of action as an expectation of the covenant (2 Sam 7.15; Hos 6.6). *Who love me*, technical language of Near Eastern treaties, whereby "love" refers to the loyalty of action that the vassal owes the sovereign. **11:** The intent is to prohibit careless use of the divine name in the context of swearing an oath ("May God do X to me unless I do Y"); such oaths were viewed as legally binding (see Judg 11.29-40). **12:** *Observe*, contrast Ex 20.8.

holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁴But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. ¹⁵Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

¹⁶Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹⁷You shall not murder.^a

¹⁸Neither shall you commit adultery.

¹⁹Neither shall you steal.

²⁰Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor.

²¹Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife.

Neither shall you desire your neighbor's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

²²These words the LORD spoke with a

loud voice to your whole assembly at the mountain, out of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, and he added no more. He wrote them on two stone tablets, and gave them to me. ²³When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you approached me; all the heads of your tribes and your elders; ²⁴and you said, "Look, the LORD our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the fire. Today we have seen that God may speak to someone and the person may still live. ²⁵So now why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, we shall die.

²⁶For who is there of all flesh that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and remained alive?

²⁷Go near, you yourself, and hear all that the LORD our God will say. Then tell us everything that the LORD our God tells you, and we will listen and do it."

²⁸The LORD heard your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me:

"I have heard the words of this people, which they have spoken to you; they are right in all that they have spoken. ²⁹If only

they had such a mind as this, to fear me and to keep all my commandments always, so that it might go well with them and with

that it might go well with them and with

^a Or kill

¹⁴: The law equally benefits slaves and non-Israelites (1:16n.; 15:15; 16:11; 24:17). ¹⁵: Contrast the rationale provided for the sabbath at Ex 20:11; Deuteronomy here, as elsewhere, emphasizes the Exodus as a central motivation for religious and social practices. ¹⁶: As *commanded you*, the ostensible precise repetition of the Decalogue here diverges from the original (Ex 20:12) by shifting to the perspective of Moses as speaker, whose annotation is now included in the revelation. ¹⁷: *Murder* is correct; text note *a* is an inaccurate translation ("kill," as a global prohibition). ¹⁸: The absolute prohibition of adultery transforms it from the breach of the contractual rights of the woman's husband into an offense against both God and the larger community. Near Eastern law normally granted the husband the sole right of deciding whether to execute or otherwise punish the wife for adultery (see *Laws of Hammurabi* § 129). Biblical law here removes the wife from the disposal of the husband and grants her the status of legal person (see 22:22n.). ²¹: *Wife* : *house*, contrast the sequence of Ex 20:17.

^{5.22-33}: Moses as mediator. While the Decalogue was given directly to the people (v. 4; 4:10-13), the rest of the laws were mediated to the people by Moses, at their plea (v. 27; 4:14). ²³⁻²⁷: 4:33; cf. Ex 20:18-21. ²⁴⁻²⁵: An awkward juxtaposition; v. 24 may be an insertion reflecting 4:33. The anxiety explains the request that Moses serve as mediator. ²⁸⁻³¹: The idea that Moses mediates between God and the people will be used in two ways: to justify the laws that Moses subsequently propounds as revelation (chs 12-26); and to justify the institution of "Mosaic" prophecy (18:15-22).

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their children forever! ³⁰Go say to them, 'Return to your tents.' ³¹But you, stand here by me, and I will tell you all the commandments, the statutes and the ordinances, that you shall teach them, so that they may do them in the land that I am giving them to possess." ³²You must therefore be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn to the right or to the left. ³³You must follow exactly the path that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you are to possess.

6 Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the LORD your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, ²so that you and your children and your children's children may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding

you, so that your days may be long. ³Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.^a ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. ⁶Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. ⁷Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. ⁸Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem^b on your forehead, ⁹and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

a Or *The LORD our God is one LORD*, or *The LORD our God, the LORD is one*, or *The LORD is our God, the LORD is one* *b* Or *as a frontlet*

6.1–11.32: The requirement of loyalty to God. A sermonic preamble to the laws of chs 12–26. **6.1–3:** Introduction, stressing the rewards of obedience to the covenant. **1:** *The commandment* . . . occupy, the Hebrew is nearly identical to 5.31. The precise repetition of terminology legitimates the entire second discourse—both *the commandment* (chs 6–11) and *the statutes and ordinances* (the legal corpus of chs 12–26; see 12.1)—as originating in direct divine revelation from God on Horeb (5.31). The Book of the Covenant (Ex 21–23), with its “ordinances” (Ex 21.1), and the “statutes and ordinances” of Deuteronomic law (6.1; 12.1), now in implicit tension, are independently presented as God’s words to Moses on the mountain immediately following the Decalogue (Ex 20.21; 24.3,12). **2:** *Fear*, better, “revere” (see 4.10n.). **4–25:** A sermon on the first commandment of the Decalogue, incorporating direct allusions to it: vv. 4 and 14 refer to 5.7; vv. 12,21,23 refer to 5.6; v. 15 (“jealous God”) refers to 5.9; vv. 5,17 refer to 5.10. **4–9:** In Jewish tradition these verses begin the important prayer known as the Shema (“Hear!”). **4–5:** This “first” commandment (Mk 12.29–30) restates the first Decalogue commandment in positive form. *Hear, O Israel* (5.1; 9.1; 20.3; 27.9), an imperative modeled on a wisdom teacher’s call for attention (Prov 1.8; 4.1,10; 5.7; 7.24; 23.19). *The LORD . . . alone*, as text note *a* indicates, the Hebrew is difficult; the translation selected makes most sense historically. The focus is not on God’s nature in the abstract but on the quality of Israel’s relationship to God. The proclamation, like 5.7, does not deny the existence of other gods but is concerned with the exclusivity of Israel’s loyalty to God (as in ch 13). This vision is universalized in later prophecy (Zech 14.9). **5:** *Love*; see 5.10n. The paradox of commanding a feeling (as in Lev 19.17–18) is resolved with the recognition that covenantal “love” is not private emotion but loyalty of action toward both deity and neighbor (see 5.1–33n.). **7:** *At home . . . away*, using paired opposites as a merism (28.3–6n.) to indicate totality: One should always *talk about* the commandments. **8:** *Bind them*, based on the wisdom teacher’s symbolically urging his students to focus on the lesson (Prov 3.3; 6.21; 7.3). This law, literally interpreted, provides the basis for the Jewish convention of binding phylacteries, containing an abstract of biblical law, upon the arm and forehead. **9:** *Doorposts*, important transitional spaces in which religious-legal ceremonies were performed and where divine images might be stored (see Ex 12.7,21–23; 21.6; Isa 57.8). Perhaps partially reacting against a formerly magical back-

10 When the LORD your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, 11 houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and when you have eaten your fill, 12 take care that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 13 The LORD your God you shall fear; him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear. 14 Do not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who are all around you, 15 because the LORD your God, who is present with you, is a jealous God. The anger of the LORD your God would be kindled against you and he would destroy you from the face of the earth.

16 Do not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah. 17 You must diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his decrees, and his statutes that he has commanded you. 18 Do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, so that it may go well with you,

and so that you may go in and occupy the good land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give you, 19 thrusting out all your enemies from before you; as the LORD has promised.

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

7 When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many na-

ground, this law devotes that space to Torah. The law provides the basis for the Jewish convention of placing a small box containing this and related texts upon the upper portion of the right doorpost (Heb “mezuzah”). 10-11: The list, *land . . . houses . . . cisterns . . . olive groves* (cf. Josh 24.13; Neh 9.24-25), defines the elements of an established civilization, which Israel is about to both inherit and become. 12: The threat of forgetting and the risk of apostasy are repeatedly stressed (4.9-14n.; 8.11-20; 32.18; cf. 5.29; Hos 2.5-13). 16: *Test . . . Massah*, for the incident and the Hebrew pun, see Ex 17.2-7; see also Mt 4.7. 20: The Jewish Passover text (“Haggadah”) includes this and similar didactic questions (Ex 12.21-27; 13.1-10, 11-16). 22: See 4.34n.

7.1-10.11: Risks to covenantal faith upon entry to the land. The first issue is that Israel enters an already inhabited land, whose greater population and worship apparatus it must confront (ch 7). Thereafter, successful habitation carries its own risks: complacency and loss of historical memory (ch 8).

7.1-26: The war of conquest. Two topics are treated: the command to destroy the original occupants of Canaan (vv. 1-3, 6, 17-24); and the command not to worship their gods (vv. 4-5, 7-15, 25-26). The editors join the two themes at v. 16. 1: An after-the-fact literary compilation more than a historical portrayal: The peoples included in the “table of nations” vary considerably (Gen 15.19-21; Ex 3.8, 17; 13.5; 23.23; 33.2; 34.11; Deut 20.17; Josh 3.10; 9.1; 11.3; 12.8; 24.11; Judg 3.5; 1 Kings 9.20; Ezra 9.1; Neh 9.8; 2 Chr 8.7). *Hittites* (Gen 23.10; 25.9; 49.29-30; 50.13; Num 13.29, etc.), the Hittite Empire (ca. 1700-1200 BCE) in fact flourished not in Canaan but in Anatolia, in central Turkey. The *Jebusites*, the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Jerusalem, retained control of the city until conquered by David several centuries after the conquest (2 Sam 5.6-7). The latter narrative implies the nonimplementation of this law. The ideal number *seven*, which signifies completion or totality (28.7; Gen 1; the plague list of Ps 78.44-51 and 105.28-36 in contrast to Ex 7-12), suggests that the enumeration may be artificial. 2: This