

The Writings of Moses

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And he said to them, “**O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe** all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And **beginning with Moses** and all the Prophets, **he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself**. ... Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that **everything written about me in the [nomos]¹ of Moses** and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” **Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures** ... (Luke 24:25-27, 44-45 ESV)

When they had appointed a day for [Paul], they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, **testifying to the kingdom of God** and trying **to convince them about Jesus both from the [nomos] of Moses** and from the Prophets. (Acts 28:23 ESV)

For **if you believed Moses, you would believe me**; for he wrote of me. But **if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?**” (John 5:46-47 ESV)

Do not think that I have come to abolish the [nomos of Moses] or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the [nomos of Moses] until all is accomplished. (Matthew 5:17-18 ESV)

The Writings of Moses are contained in the first five books of the Old Testament, commonly called the “Pentateuch”. **These writings comprise the greatest outpouring of revelation from the Creator God to his most important creation – human beings**. Yet down through the centuries some have questioned the veracity of these writings. Others cling to a dogma that each word was individually penned by Moses making the text itself sacred. **What did Moses actually write?** Why are these writings God’s **“greatest outpouring of revelation”**? How **can we be confident that God is actually speaking to us through these writings?** The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the Writings of Moses are the basis of all revelation from God to humanity. The rest of the Bible is an elaboration and explanation of the teaching of God contained in the Writings of Moses.

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¹ The Greek word *nomos* came to be used for the Hebrew word *torah*. The Hebrew word *torah* means “teaching”, “instruction”, “direction”; whereas, *nomos* means approximately the same as the English word “law” – **it is a completely incorrect translation**. See the discussion in [Excursus 8 – torah and nomos](#).

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1. The Documentary Hypothesis

The Documentary Hypothesis is a theory that attempts to identify so-called “source documents” behind the material we have in the Pentateuch. **The theory is based on purely subjective literary analysis.** The proponents of the theory ignored all facts of history and archeology that were available even in their day – today we have far more historical and archeological information which thoroughly repudiates the theory. The classic form of the theory took its shape from Julius Wellhausen in his book “*Die Composition des Hexateuches*” in 1876-1877. He was heavily influenced by K.H. Graf, so the theory is commonly called the **Graf-Wellhausen Theory**. Although the theory stands thoroughly refuted today, **many scholars still cling to its conclusions** – this makes reading their material difficult. Even in its day, there were many scholars who opposed the theory.² The best scholars today take a wholistic approach to the text of the Bible avoiding the methods of nineteenth century literary critics.³

It is beyond the scope of this paper to review the Graf-Wellhausen Theory in detail or demonstrate its invalidity. For a detailed discussion of the theory and its invalidity, please see **Harrison (IOT)** pages 19-32, 62-82, and 495-541; or, **Young (IOT)** pages 107-154.

² See Harrison (IOT) pages 17-18, 29-32, Young (IOT) page 135

³ See, for example, Garrett pages 15-20, Craigie pages 20-29, Tsumura (SM1) pages 19-23, (SM2) pages 5-7
Wednesday, May 22, 2024

Note that Wellhausen was active at approximately the same time as Charles Darwin was promoting his theories.⁴ The notion of “evolutionary” development was “in the air”. **All of the antecedents of Wellhausen**, who had developed the foundation upon which his theory rested had one thing in common: they **were men who had grown agnostic**, as were Darwin and Wellhausen. **All these men sought to find a way to push the influence of God out of their lives**. **Wellhausen** tried to demonstrate that God’s revealed teaching was nothing but a patchwork of confused traditions of men; therefore, of no authority. **Darwin** tried to establish the notion that there could be a creation without a Creator; therefore, faith in a “God” was unjustified. **All these men refused to acknowledge God**. The Apostle Paul has some harsh words for such men:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven **against** all ungodliness and unrighteousness of **men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth**. For **what can be known about God is plain to them**, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, **in the things that have been made**.

So **they are without excuse**. For **although they knew God, they did not honor him as God** or give thanks to him, but **they became futile in their thinking**, and **their foolish hearts were darkened**. **Claiming to be wise, they became fools ... they exchanged the truth about God for a lie** and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator ... And since **they did not see fit to acknowledge God**, **God gave them up to a debased mind** ... (Romans 1:18-22, 25, 28 ESV)

Paul is explicit that **General Revelation** is sufficient for human beings to be aware of and accepting of the existence of God and his position as Creator. The teaching of the Bible comprises **Special Revelation** – the words of God recorded by men under specific circumstances for the edification of the original recipients of the recorded words; but, more importantly, as a whole corpus, the recorded words of the Creator God are **a consistent, complete, correct, and inviolable instruction set from God** for those human beings he sees fit to call and to reveal the understanding of the Scriptures.

2. What did Moses Write?

The simplistic view that Moses wrote every word of the Pentateuch exactly as we have it is simply **not tenable based on the very witness of the text**. However, the New Testament authors are clear that Moses is the operative person behind the Pentateuch. It is the clear position of this paper that **the entire Bible is the inspired word of God**, purposefully revealed by God, and of absolute authority.⁵ In the following sections, this document goes through the entire Pentateuch, in some detail, analyzing the provenance of each section. Before the detailed analysis, **some general observations are in order**.

Moses was raised as a Prince of Egypt:

Now **the daughter of Pharaoh** came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She **saw the basket** [at the river’s edge]⁶ and sent her servant woman, and she took it. **When she opened it, she saw the child**, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.” ... When the child grew older, she brought him to **Pharaoh’s daughter**, and **he became her son**. (Exodus 2:5-6, 10a ESV)

And **Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds**. (Acts 7:22 ESV)

In the court of Egyptian Pharaohs all proceedings were recorded by a battery of scribes in multiple languages.⁷ It is very likely that there were Israelites who were trained as scribes. At the very least, Moses would have been capable of providing such training. R.L. Harris asserts:

... **Moses, trained in the learning of the Egyptians, surely could write** Egyptian, Akkadian and Hebrew, possibly also Hurrian and Hittite. (TWOT page 459)

The writing of the Egyptian language was done in a cursive script based on hieroglyphics, called “hieratic”.⁸ The “Hebrew” spoken by the Israelites at the time of Moses was a Northwest Semitic dialect

⁴ Darwin’s book “*The Origin of Species*” was published in 1859.

⁵ See *Excursus 1 – Revelation, Inspiration, and Authority*

⁶ Or “in the midst of the pool”, See Fritz pages 166-167

⁷ See the discussion of the Amarna Letters in Rohl (TT) pages 226-227, (EE) pages 300-303, and Moran pages xviii-xxvi

⁸ See Gardiner pages 19-26, Harrison (IOT) page 204, see also the article “Hieratic” at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hieratic>

that later developed into the classical Hebrew of the Bible.⁹ This dialect was written in the “**proto-Sinaitic script**”.¹⁰ During the thirty-eight years in the desert, Moses would have had ample time and personnel to record, collect, edit, and copy all the material we have in the Pentateuch.

The proto-Sinaitic script is very different from the script of **classical Hebrew** – the so-called **Palaeo-Hebrew script**, which was in use at least until the Exile. Some suggest that when Ezra brought the *torah* back to Jerusalem, it was in the Aramaic square script.¹¹ Others suggest this transition took place later.¹² The **Masoretic Text of the Old Testament**, which we use today, is in the Aramaic square script. But fundamental to the Masoretic Text is the vowel points which provide pronunciation. They were added in the Middle Ages. From this it is clear that we have little idea how “Hebrew” was actually pronounced ancient times – and Moses would NOT even recognize the Hebrew text as we have it. The **documents from Qumran** are largely in Aramaic square script, but some are in Palaeo-Hebrew script. The earliest manuscripts of the **Samaritan Pentateuch** are in a script similar to the Palaeo-Hebrew script.

Whatever documents were written by Moses or produced under his auspices have come down to us through a very complicated process of collection, transcription, and transmission. We have the complete finished product – **complete understanding of how it was produced is NOT required to understand the teaching**. However, since the documents themselves provide many clues and interesting pieces of information regarding their provenance, **it is worthwhile attaining as much understanding as possible**.

Briefly, the following is a **high-level summary of the literary activity under the auspices of Moses**:

- For the early chapters of Geneses, Moses clearly had written source material that he collected, translated, and compiled into his document.
- For the Joseph narratives, the material may have existed only on oral form (possibly also written) when the Israelites went into the desert: Moses had to assemble the material, evaluate it, and compile it into a coherent document.
- For the early parts of Exodus, Moses and his sister Miriam were the foremost first-hand authorities.
- The largest section of the Pentateuch is the material **from Exodus chapter twelve through Numbers chapter ten**: all of the narrative material in this section occurred either in the approach to Horeb or at Horeb; again, Moses is the foremost first-hand authority. It is impossible to definitively identify which didactic material was actually given in context and which was received during the thirty-eight years in the wilderness and incorporated into the developing documents; but again, the didactic material was delivered from YHWH through Moses, so Moses is the authority and the operative agent behind the finished product.
- The **remainder of the Book of Numbers** is a collection of material covering the thirty-eight years in the wilderness and the final approach to the Promised Land. While Moses is the first-hand authority for most of this material, there are parts of it for which Joshua would have had better information. This suggests that this material may have been assembled by Joshua after the conquest.
- In the **Book of Deuteronomy**, Moses becomes “**the great orator**”. His recorded speeches rate as some of the greatest recorded orations of all time. **This material was clearly recorded as he spoke**. It was later assembled into the book as we have it, again likely under Joshua.

We can only speculate on the details of **the process of development of the documents**, but there are some clues. Joshua was Moses’ assistant from the beginning. During the construction of the Tabernacle, Joshua was with Moses in **the temporary Tent of Meeting**, likely recording the revelations from YHWH to Moses:

The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone ...” So **Moses rose with his assistant Joshua**, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. (Exodus 24:12a, 13 ESV see also Numbers 11:28)

⁹ See Saenz-Badillos pages 1-49, Albright (**ARCH**) pages 177-203

¹⁰ See Harrison (**IOT**) page 205; Albright (**ARCH**) page 192-193 shows the character formation of this script.

¹¹ See Saenz-Badillos pages 112-113

¹² See Harrison (**IOT**) page 207

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door.

Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent. (Exodus 33:7-11 ESV)

The instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle are recorded starting in Exodus chapter twenty-five. Starting in Exodus 25:1 and continuing through Exodus 34:1 the phrase “YHWH said to Moses” is repeated nine times.¹³ This is how a third party, such as Joshua, would report the words of YHWH as they were spoken to Moses.¹⁴ Then in Exodus 35:1 through 36:1 is recorded the speech of Moses to deliver the instructions from YHWH – again reported from the perspective of a third party listening to the speech, such as a scribe recording the speech. Then from Exodus 36:8 through Exodus 39:43 is recorded the actual construction of the Tabernacle, along with the comment:

These are the records of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, as they were recorded at the commandment of Moses, the responsibility of the Levites under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. (Exodus 38:21 ESV)

Moses is explicitly stated to have “commanded” the recording of the delivery of the instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle and the details of its subsequent construction. The Levites are identified as the responsible party to do the recording. We can assume similar arrangements as the other material of the Pentateuch was assembled.

To say that Moses utilized written sources or that he had other people actually write things down which were incorporated into the final documents does not in any way diminish the fact that Moses is the “author” of the material we have in the Pentateuch. Moses was clearly the operative force behind all this material. The actual production of the documents is strictly a literary process. Consider the letter of Apostle Paul to the Romans:

I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. (Romans 16:22 ESV)

Does that make Tertius, the “author” of letter to the Romans? Is Paul’s authorship somehow diminished because he did not actually pen the words? The production of any literary work requires the hands of many people. The Writings of Moses are no exception.

3. The Early Parts of Genesis

3.1 תולדות - toledoth

The key to understanding the provenance of the early parts of Genesis the Hebrew word

תולדות - toledoth, a feminine noun derived from יָלַד - yalad, “bear”, “beget”, “bring forth”, “gender”,¹⁵ *toledoth* is always used in plural and with construction state or with a pronominal suffix. In English translations, *toledoth* is most often translated as “generations” and taken as part of a heading for the following section. **Harrison** makes the following remark:

The word originated in the Hebrew root יָלַד ... which doubtless accounts for the English rendering “generation”. But from the time of the Hebrew lexicographer Gesenius it has been apparent from Old Testament usages of the word that it means a “**history**”, “**narrative**”, or “**genealogical record**” of a family or some other such social unit. ... Quite clearly, therefore, the phrase “these are the generations of” points back to the beginnings of the family history and not forward to its later development through a line of descendants. (IOT page 546)

Harrison further discusses the ancient scribal practice of providing a “**colophon**” at the end of a tablet of cuneiform writing. The colophon could contain such things as a title of the document, when the

¹³ See Exodus 25:1, 30:11,17,22,34, 31:1,12, 33:1, 34:1

¹⁴ Note that this is determined by context – the ‘third person’ introduction formula is also used by Moses to report his first-person words, see for example, Exodus 3:13, 4:1,10, 5:1,22-23

¹⁵ See **TWOT** article 867 page 378

tablet was created or copied, the sequence of the tablet in a multi-tablet document, the name of the scribe, as well as the owner of the tablet, that is whose “history” it was.¹⁶

For example, consider the first “tablet” of the Book of Genesis consisting of the material from Genesis 1:1 through Genesis 2:3 with the following the colophon:

These are the [histories] (toledoth) of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. (Genesis 2:4 ESV)

The phrase “the heavens and the earth” is also Genesis 1:1 and is the “title” of the tablet, it also identifies the “owner”. The phrase “when they were created” looks back to the original creation. In both cases the verb, בָּרָא - barah, “to create”, is used. The phrase “the day that YHWH ‘elohim made” relates to the day that the “tablet” was created, i.e., the time of re-creation recounted in Genesis 1:3 through Genesis 2:3. The verb used in this phrase is עָשָׂה - `asah, “to make”. This verb is first used in Genesis 1:7 on the second day of re-creation when God “made” a separation of waters forming the visible sky. The first “tablet” contains the “history of the heavens and the earth”. It was recorded, “in the day that YHWH made” the re-creation of the earth. Clearly only God had first-hand knowledge of this information – it was passed on from God, presumably to Adam, to be recorded.

The second “tablet” contains the material from Genesis 2:5 through Genesis 4:26. The colophon is:

This is the book of the [histories] (toledoth) of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. (Genesis 5:1-2 ESV)

The beneficial owner of the “history” is Adam. It was recorded at the time that “God created man ... male and female he created them”. Adam had first-hand knowledge of everything in these chapters.

The third “tablet” contains the material from Genesis 5:3 through Genesis 6:8. The colophon is:

These are the [histories] (toledoth) of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. (Genesis 6:9 ESV)

Noah is the beneficial owner of the “history”. This is the first genealogical record in the Bible showing the “righteous line” from Adam to Lamech, Noah’s father. Clearly this information was passed down to Noah in either written or oral form. In the phrase “blameless in his generation”, the word for generation is דֹּר - dor. This is the normal Hebrew word for a genealogical generation. The comments on Noah are scribal comments, probably NOT written about Noah by himself, they indicate conditions when the tablet was created.

The fourth “tablet” contains the material from Genesis 6:10 through Genesis 9:29. The colophon is:

These are the [histories] (toledoth) of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood. (Genesis 10:1 ESV)

Shem, Ham, and Japheth are the beneficial owners of the history. The tablet was created when “Sons were born to them after the flood”. In Genesis 6:10 the title of the tablet is retained: “Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth”. Noah’s sons had first-hand information on all the material contained in this tablet.

These first four tablets seem to have been more or less retained as complete documents by Moses.

There are several more “tablets” identified by *toledoth*, but Moses used the material from them in a more selective manner. The next instance of the term is:

These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their [thol’dotham], in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood. (Genesis 10:32 ESV)

This verse uses a special form of toledoth : תּוֹלְדוֹתָם - thol’dotham, the form contains a third person masculine plural pronominal suffix which refers to “clans”, מִשְׁפָּחָה - mish’pahah. This combination is also used in Numbers chapter one for each of the tribes in the first census.¹⁷ The sense is “a genealogical record”, NOT a “history” as in a colophon. Genesis chapter ten is the “table of nations” which carries the descendants of Shem for five generations. Clearly, this is a later document than the other source

¹⁶ See Harrison (IOT) pages 543-547; see also Harrison’s comment on the work of Wiseman pages 63-64

¹⁷ Similar forms of *thol’dotham* are also used in Exodus 6:16,19, 28:10 with the same meaning.

documents Moses is using at this point. The next two “tablets” identified by colophons are very short and therefore apparently only excerpts from the original “tablets”.

The material from Genesis 11:1 through 11:9 is excerpted from “tablet” five. The colophon is:

These are the [histories] (toledoth) of Shem. (Genesis 11:10a ESV)

The material from Genesis 11:10b through 11:26 is excerpted from “tablet” six. The colophon is:

These are the [histories] (toledoth) of Terah. (Genesis 11:27a ESV)

All of the material to this point represents a purely Mesopotamian background. Writing of cuneiform on clay tablets is first attested for **the Sumerian language**. It was later used for Accadian, of which Assyrian and Babylonian are dialects. By the time of Terah, the dominance of the Sumerian language was waning, but **it is very likely that the original versions of the tablets discussed so far were written in Sumerian.**

3.2 The Patriarchal Histories

Abraham grew up in the southern Sumerian city of Ur.¹⁸ Abraham’s native language was probably **Sumerian**. He would also have been familiar with **Accadian**. When he migrated to the area of Haran in northern Mesopotamia, he would have been exposed to an early Aramaic dialect. In northern Mesopotamia cuneiform on clay tablets was certainly in use.¹⁹ When Abraham migrated to Canaan, he would have come into contact with **early Northwest Semitic dialects**. There is evidence of a Northwest Semitic dialect with considerable affinity to Hebrew written with cuneiform on clay tablets during the second millennium.²⁰ The language is called “**Ugaritic**”. It is an alphabetic script as distinct from Sumerian and Accadian which are syllabic scripts.

It is most natural to assume that Abraham had in his possession the clay tablets discussed in the previous section. The next “colophon” is in Genesis chapter twenty-five. The material from Genesis twelve through twenty-five is considerably larger than any of the previous “tablets”. If it was originally on clay tablets, there were probably several of them. If, however, this material was first written down in the land of Canaan, it was more likely written on leather, with the colophon simply being a standard scribal practice.

The next colophon is:

These are the [histories] (toledoth) of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s servant, bore to Abraham. (Genesis 25:12 ESV)

Ishmael is identified as the beneficial owner of the document. According to standard practice, Ishmael was indeed Abraham’s firstborn son. What Sarah, Abraham’s official wife, did was a legitimate practice. An official wife who was unable to provide sons, could assign sons by her slave to her husband. This is demonstrated again when Rachel and Leah assign sons of their slaves to Jacob.²¹ The material of this document covers the life of Abraham. It would naturally belong to his firstborn son. Sons by concubines could NOT assume the status of “firstborn”.

The next colophon identifies a very short excerpt from another document. The material is Genesis 25:13 through 25:18. The colophon is:

These are the [histories] (toledoth) of Isaac, Abraham’s son (Genesis 25 19a ESV)

This excerpt contains a brief summary of Ishmael’s sons and their distribution. We can only speculate what else may have been in this document. Ishmael was about fifteen years older than Isaac and died at age 137.²² Isaac lived to 180,²³ so Isaac outlived Ishmael by about sixty years. This would be sufficient time for Isaac to have observed the distribution of Ishmael’s sons.

¹⁸ See Genesis 11:27b-31; note the term “Chaldeans” is an anachronism. The Chaldean tribes did not live in this area until much later, see the **ESV** comment on Genesis 11:28; see also **NBD** page 203-204.

¹⁹ See the comments on “Mari” in **NBD** page 68

²⁰ See the comments on “Ras Shamra” in **NBD** pages 70-71

²¹ This topic is discussed in detail in the paper, “**The Human Condition**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

²² See Genesis 25:17

²³ See Genesis 35:28

The next colophon is:

These are the [histories] (toledoth) of Esau (that is Edom) (Genesis 36:1 ESV)

Again, this colophon ends a long document, Genesis 25:19b through Genesis 35:29. The title of the document is “Abraham fathered Isaac”. It contains the storey of Isaac’s life from his marriage, through the lives of Esau and Jacob, and ends with Isaac’s death. **Esau was Isaac’s firstborn son, so the family history naturally differed to him.**

Next, we have short excerpts from two final documents. The first document again belonged to Esau. The excerpt describes the growth of the family of Esau and how he came to live in “Seir”.²⁴ The colophon is:

These are the [histories] (toledoth) of Esau he father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir. (Genesis 36:9 ESV)

The last colophon in Genesis is:

These are the [histories] (toledoth) of Jacob (Genesis 37:2a ESV)

The material covered includes Genesis 36:10 through 37:1. **Some of this material clearly came from later sources** as it outlines chiefs of Edom and kings of Edom for several generations. We can only speculate how this came to be in a document attributed to “Jacob”. It is possible that Moses intended this last “colophon” to end his entire document starting with Abraham.

Moses supplies a “colophon” to the material in Numbers 1:1 through 2:34. The title of the document, where it was recorded, and its time of recording are in Numbers 1:1. The material comprises the first census, the organization of the camp, and the order of marching. The “colophon” is:

These are the [histories] (toledoth) of Aaron and Moses at the time when the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. (Numbers 3:1 ESV)

The histories of the Patriarchs were clearly recorded by them generation by generation. Notions of long periods of “oral transmission” are obviated by the text itself – the individual documents are identified by the “colophons”. The documents came into the possession of Moses, and he extracted and edited them into the final product under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

4. The Joseph Material

The “Joseph Material” comprises the remainder of the Book of Genesis – chapters thirty-seven through fifty. The material is a very carefully constructed piece of literature – clearly the work of Moses. **Joseph** is the most important actor, but **Jacob** remains the cornerstone as the patriarch of the family, and **Judah** plays an increasingly important role as the storey progresses. There are **no direct clues as to the nature of the source material.**

Harrison makes the following comment:

The remainder of Genesis deals with the Joseph narratives ... the **Egyptian background**²⁵ of which has been so well attested by scholars as to make further comment unnecessary. **Most probably this material was still in oral form** when Moses was alive ... (IOT page 551-552)

Joseph was certainly in a position to have his “memoirs” recorded – and perhaps they were in typical Egyptian fashion engraved on a wall or a monument. In any case, none of the material we have is written in first person format, although for much of it, only Joseph could have been the authority.

The material in chapter thirty-eight on **Judah and Tamar** certainly had a different source than the rest of the material. However, within the structure of the whole storey, **chapters thirty-seven and thirty-eight serve the same purpose – they set the background.** Chapter thirty-seven describes how Joseph got to Egypt. Chapter thirty-eight introduces Judah as a rather unsavory character who comes to recognize his faults and repents, as does his more famous descendant, David:

Then Judah identified them and said, **“She is more righteous than I,** since I did not give her to my son Shelah.” And he did not know her again. (Genesis 38:26 ESV)

²⁴ See Genesis 36:2-8

²⁵ Harrison cites several sources on the Egyptian background.

For **I know my transgressions**, and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight ... (Psalm 51:3-4a ESV)

As the storey unfolds, **Judah emerges as the spokesman and moral leader of the brothers:**

But **Judah** said to him, "**The man solemnly warned us**, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.' ..." And **Judah** said to Israel his father, "**Send the boy with me**, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. ..."

When **Judah** and his brothers **came to Joseph's house**, he was still there. They fell before him to the ground. ... And **Judah** said, "**What shall we say to my lord?** What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? **God has found out the guilt of your servants**; behold, we are my lord's servants, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found." ... Then **Judah** went up to him and said, "Oh, my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears, and **let not your anger burn against your servant**, for you are like Pharaoh himself. ..." (Genesis 43:3, 8, 44:14, 16, 18 ESV)

In the end, **Jacob "adopts" Ephraim and Manasseh** as his sons and transfers the "birthright" from Reuben to them; however, **Judah is given the preeminence** as the "leader". Throughout the history of Israel, there was constant tension between the tribes of Ephraim and Judah:

And **Jacob said to Joseph** ... now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; **Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine**, as Reuben and Simeon are.
(Genesis 48:3a, 5 ESV)

... **Reuben** the firstborn of Israel ... but ... **his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph** ...
(1 Chronicles 5:1 ESV)

Judah, your brothers shall praise you ... **your father's sons shall bow down before you**.
The **scepter** shall not depart from Judah, nor the **ruler's staff** from between his feet ...
(Genesis 49:8a, 8c, 10a ESV)

The "Joseph material" provides the transition from the Patriarchal Period to the Nation of Israel. What ever the source material, Moses was almost certainly the first to assemble it into a form similar to what we have. It was probably his first priority once he planned his documentation set. The primeval material and the earlier Patriarchal material were well documented, but **the origin of the Nation of Israel could easily have been lost had Moses NOT captured it.**

5. The Early Parts of Exodus

This material comprises the **first eleven chapters of the Book of Exodus**. The conditions of the Israelites in Egypt described in chapter one would have been common knowledge to Moses as he grew up. The details of his birth and ascent to the palace, in the first ten verses of chapter two, were well known to his sister **Miriam**. For Moses' flight from Egypt, his **life in Midian**, his calling, and return to Egypt in Exodus 2:11 through 4:31, only Moses could have been the authority. For the **battle with the Pharaoh**, the details of the plagues, and the final encounter with Pharaoh in chapters five through eleven, both Moses and Aaron were authorities.

All this material was **probably written down in the desert** as Moses developed his plans for the books. This material is all presented in third person past tense – the author is reporting what has already occurred. Many sections are introduced with the past tense phrases as "**YHWH said to Moses**". This is consistent with Moses writing the material after the events had occurred. This material provides the background and the setting for the final plague, death of firstborn, and the attendant miracle of the Passover.

6. The Horeb Material

This material extends from Exodus 12:1 through the rest of the Book of Exodus, includes the entire Book of Leviticus, and the first ten chapters of the Book of Numbers. The **narrative sections** of this material provide a continuous and complete storey of the approach to Horeb, the time spent at Horeb, and the departure from Horeb. The **didactic material** is interspersed with the narrative. Some of it is integrally tied to the narrative and was probably given to Moses by YHWH as the events were unfolding. Other didactic material was clearly revealed later and included in the finished product.

6.1 The Exodus Event

Based on his Egyptian training, Moses would certainly have kept an **ongoing log of events** as they unfolded. Moses would have had a number of scribes to whom he dictated the records to be kept. These records would have been used later to prepare the narrative material we have.

The first part of the narrative is introduced with the title **“YHWH spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt”**.²⁶ The instructions for the **first Passover** are the given in Exodus 12:2-13 – this was likely recorded as Moses delivered it. The didactic material introducing the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**, in Exodus 12:14-20, fits perfectly here in the finished product, but it would have had little relevance to the Israelites at that time – it was probably given to Moses later and incorporated into the finished product. Exodus 12:21-27 reads like **an actual record of the assembly on the tenth of Abib** where Moses explained to the **“Elders of Israel”**²⁷ the Passover process. The record of the actual Passover event and the marshalling of the people at Succoth follows in Exodus 12:29-39. **Things were happening so fast during that first forty-eight hours that likely nothing was written down at that time.** Exodus chapter twelve ends with didactic material: a historical note in verses 40-42, further Passover instructions in verses 43-49, and a summary of the events in verse 50-51. Exodus 13:1-16 contains didactic material related to the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** and the consecration of the **“firstborn”**. This **didactic material** was probably given to Moses at a later time and incorporated into the finished product.

Exodus 13:17-22 reads like a record of the first part of the journey likely recorded at **Etham**, the first resting place. **This is likely the first opportunity Moses had to have events recorded.** The Israelites had traveled night and day along the **Way of Yam Suph**²⁸ across, what we call, the Sinai Peninsula. Etham is to the northwest of Yam Suph, **“The Sea of the End”**,²⁹ we call it the Gulf of Aqaba. In Exodus 14:1-4 YHWH provides instruction to Moses, likely recorded at Etham;³⁰ and verses 5 through 14 record the result of following those instructions, **likely recorded at the edge of Yam Suph**. Exodus 14:15-31 records the **actual crossing** of Yam Suph – obviously written down on the east side after the crossing.

On the east side of Yam Suph the Israelites were safe – they had escaped from Egypt. There is no indication how many days they stayed there, but probably not a few. During this time the **“Song of the Sea”**³¹ was composed, copied, distributed among the people, and celebrated.

6.2 The Approach to Horeb

In Exodus 15:22 through 16:1, Moses summarizes many days of travel mentioning four campsites. **At each campsite, a record would have been made of significant events** – some are retained in the documents we have. A most significant event was recorded at the **“Wilderness of Sin”**. The people complained of hunger. YHWH responded by providing **“manna”** and **“quail”**. However, the real significance of this salvific act was **the attendant object lesson**. YHWH provided food on days one through six of each week, but not on day seven. This was to **teach the people that the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath**.³² This implies that they were encamped for at least a week, most likely two or more weeks. **Exodus 16:31-36 is a later comment:** it quotes two sayings of Moses, which are NOT otherwise attested; it makes reference to **הָעֵדֻת** - ha'eduth, “the testimony”, the Ark of the Covenant, which had not yet been built; and it states that “manna” was eaten until **“the boarder of the land of Canaan”** which was about forty years in the future.

The next campsite mentioned is **“Rephidim”**, in the area of Horeb.³³ Here the people complained for lack of water. Moses is told to “strike the rock” with his staff to provide water, but still the people lack faith and say, **“is YHWH among us or not”**. At Rephidim, a band of **Amalekites attacks Israel**. They are

²⁶ See Exodus 12:1

²⁷ See *Excursus 3 – The Elders of Israel*

²⁸ See Exodus 13:18, derek hammid*bar yam suph – “way of the wilderness yam suph”

²⁹ See Fritz pages 84-105

³⁰ See Fritz pages 219-228

³¹ See Exodus 15:1b-18

³² See Exodus 16:2-30

³³ See Exodus 17:1-7

defeated and **Moses is specifically told to record it in a book; and, from the written record, to orally remind Joshua of the event:**

Then the LORD said to Moses, “**Write this as a memorial in a book** and **recite it in the ears of Joshua**, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” (Exodus 17:14 ESV)

This victory is significant because, although the Israelites had some weapons,³⁴ they had not yet been trained as an army. The victory was **an object lesson to combat the people’s lack of faith** – YHWH would fight the battles, “**YHWH Is My Banner**”.³⁵

Next the text of Exodus in chapter eighteen records the arrival of **Jethro/Reuel**,³⁶ the father of Moses’ second wife, **Zipporah**. This event apparently also occurs at Rephidim. Jethro gives Moses good advice regarding the organization of the people. Rohl has an interesting suggestion that **Jethro may have also been a source of some of the information Moses included in Genesis**.³⁷

After this the Israelites finally got to Mount Sinai:

[In] the third [month] after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day **they came into the wilderness of Sinai**. They set out from Rephidim and came into the wilderness of Sinai, and they encamped in the wilderness. There **Israel encamped before the mountain** ... (Exodus 19:1-2 ESV)

This material is significant not only because of the events it recounts, but also **it establishes Moses’ pattern of recording events**. These ongoing records were later used to prepare the documents that have come down to us.

6.3 The Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant

At Mount Sinai, the first thing YHWH does is to present the people with **the terms of the vassal covenant**, which he is imposing, and to which the people readily agree:

...Moses went up to God. **The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob,** and tell the people of Israel:

You yourselves have seen **what I did to the Egyptians**, and how **I bore you on eagles’ wings** and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed **obey my voice** and **keep my covenant**, **you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples**, for all the earth is mine; and **you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**.

These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

So **Moses came and called the elders** of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. **All the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.”** (Exodus 19:3-8a ESV)

Behind this simple account, there is very much happening. YHWH is careful to specify **the historical premise** which gave him the right as **suzerain** to specify the terms of the treaty to his vassal. YHWH “**did to the Egyptians**” a total defeat in war which allowed YHWH to remove Egypt’s slaves, the people of Israel, “**on eagles’ wings**” to be his slaves. YHWH specifies **three requirements of the covenant**:

- obey my voice
- keep my covenant
- be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation

YHWH promised the vassal people as **the benefit of the covenant** that they would “**be my treasured possession among all peoples**”. Although in reality they had no choice, the vassal people readily agreed “**all that the LORD has spoken we will do**”. **The process of attaining this agreement is not stated**. Israel arrived at Sinai as a motely rabble spread out in the valley in a hodgepodge camp. They had a system of “**Elders**”³⁸ which maintained some control over them. Moses specifically dealt with these Elders. **To these Elders the terms of the covenant would have been presented**. The Elders would then take the requirements of YHWH back to the people and explain them. The consent of “**all the people**” would then be taken back to Moses. **This process would take several days**. When Moses reported back

³⁴ See Exodus 13:17-18

³⁵ See Exodus 17:15

³⁶ See Exodus 2:18 and Numbers 10:29

³⁷ See Rohl (EE) pages 188-189, see also *Excursus 2 – Jethro, the Priest of Midian*

³⁸ See *Excursus 3 – The Elders of Israel*

to YHWH, he was instructed to **ensure that “the people” would “believe forever”** – this implies writing a detailed account of the events and the words, which we have:

And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. And the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that **the people** may hear when I speak with you, and **may also believe you forever.**” (Exodus 19:8b-9a ESV)

The detailed record of the setting and the delivery of the Ten Commandments follows in Exodus 19:9b-25 and 20:1-21. The **Ten Commandments comprise the first *torah***, the first teaching of God to explain what it means **“to obey my voice”** – the primary covenant stipulation. The account ends with:

The people stood far off, while **Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.** (Exodus 20:21 ESV)

This apparently implies that **Moses went up the mountain**, because the text next contains the apparent contents of the **Book of the Covenant**³⁹ in Exodus 20:22-26, and all of chapters 21, 22, and 23. At this time, the plan was for Israel to leave Horeb and go directly to the Promised Land with Moses as leader. The purpose of much of the contents of the Book of the Covenant is to prepare the people to function as an integrated community, a nation, once in the Promised Land. **Later very much similar and more detailed information is provided** – at first, God’s probable intention was to provide the additional information once Israel was in the Promised Land. Some of this material has a distinct affinity with certain ancient “law codes”, but as in all points of comparison, differences are far more significant than similarities, and the Biblical material is very different.⁴⁰ All this material is very much *torah*, **the instruction from God which he intends all True Worshipers to understand and live by.**

Exodus chapter twenty-four contains the **Covenant Ratification Ceremony**. The first two verses seem to be a more detailed explanation of Exodus 20:21:

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 from afar. Moses alone shall come near to the LORD, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him.”** (Exodus 24:1-2 ESV)

The group accompanying Moses was to come up the mountain part way and worship so that they had some feeling for the theophany in which only Moses participated. On the mountain, YHWH communicate to Moses the **contents of the Book of the Covenant**, next:

Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the [mish^opatim].⁴¹ And all the people answered with one voice and said, **“All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.”** (Exodus 24:3 ESV)

This communication would use the same process as the original presentation of the covenant and would take several days. Again, **“the people” confirm their commitment to “obey my voice”**, the primary covenant stipulation. Next, under inspiration and with the help of the Holy Spirit,⁴² **Moses writes down the contents of the Book of the Covenant**, and the formal ceremony occurs, over several days:

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 twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered **burnt offerings** and sacrificed **peace offerings** of oxen to the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar.

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.”** And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, **“Behold the blood of the covenant** that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.” (Exodus 24:4-8 ESV)

After this, the group that went part way up the mountain were allowed to go up to YHWH’s presence and **participate in a covenant meal**, because the **“blood of the covenant”** had been applied and **God could account them “holy”** and they could be in his presence:

Then Moses and **Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders** of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for

³⁹ See Exodus 24:7

⁴⁰ See *Excursus 4 – Statutes and Ancient Law Codes*

⁴¹ In this context, *mish^opatim* implies the explanation of the meaning and the significance of the **“words of YHWH”**.

⁴² See John 14:26

clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; **they beheld God, and ate and drank.** (Exodus 24:9-11 ESV)

The events at Mount Sinai created the Nation of Israel. God presented through Moses his first *torah*, teaching, for Israel. The purpose of the teaching was to begin to explain to Israel what it meant “to obey my voice” – the primary stipulation of the Sinai Covenant. **This was the beginning of the greatest outpouring of revelation that God has given to humanity.** The Ten Commandments are the definition of the Way of God. The rest of the Writings of Moses provide much elaboration of the Way of God.

6.4 On the Mountain and in the Tent of Meeting

After the Covenant Ratification Ceremony, **YHWH called Moses and Joshua to come up the mountain:**

The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you **the tablets of stone**, with the [torah], [even]⁴³ the commandment, **which I have written for their instruction.**” So **Moses rose with his assistant Joshua**, and Moses **went up into the mountain of God.** And he said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them.”

Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. **The glory of the LORD dwelt on Mount Sinai**, and the cloud covered it six days. And **on the seventh day** he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. 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. Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And **Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.** (Exodus 24:12-18 ESV)

During these forty days, YHWH communicated to Moses the **plans for the Tabernacle**. Presumably Joshua recorded the material, probably on leather. We have the record in Exodus chapters twenty-five through thirty-one. Clearly, stone is the most durable writing material – **YHWH himself wrote the two tablets** of the Ten Commandments.⁴⁴ Moses was given the two tablets to carry down from the mountain:

And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, **the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.** (Exodus 31:18 ESV)

The text of Exodus next contains the **golden calf incident**,⁴⁵ the intercession of Moses,⁴⁶ and Moses’ personal theophany.⁴⁷ **Moses was clearly the first-hand authority for this material.** He may have written it down himself or dictated it to an assistant such as Joshua. Exodus 34:10-26 contains the record of the **“Covenant of Performance”**.⁴⁸ This covenant is distinct from and NOT part of the Sinai Covenant. It is a commitment from YHWH that he will perform his purpose – the Plan of God will be accomplished. **Moses is explicitly told to write down the words of this covenant:**

And the LORD said to Moses, **“Write these words,** for in accordance **with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.**” (Exodus 34:27 ESV)

Next the text contains a narrative comment on the **“shinning face of Moses”**,⁴⁹ followed by Moses’ speech to inform the people of YHWH’s instructions for the Tabernacle,⁵⁰ and the description of the actual construction.⁵¹ **The period of construction** lasted something less than six months. During this period Moses spend time in the temporary tent of meeting communicating with YHWH. When Moses was on the mountain during the first forty days, he was given the **instructions for the consecration ceremony for Aaron and his sons.**⁵² The performance of the ceremony is described in Leviticus chapter eight. The details of performing the various sacrifices presuppose that the instructions for **the five main**

⁴³ The “torah” includes the Ten Commandments; the Hebrew is best taken as an apposition where “commandment” particularizes “torah”: the Hebrew is **וְהַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוָה** - w^hatorah w^hammitzwah, “with the torah with the commandment”.

⁴⁴ There is much speculation as to why there were “two” tablets. Normally stone stela were inscribed on all side (Exodus 32:15), depending on the shape of the stela there could be more than two sides. Depending on the size of the stela, the entire text of the Ten Commandments could easily fit on one stela. Normally for ancient treaties, two copies were made – one for each party. The Ten Commandments, being the most important teaching based on the Sinai Covenant, it is possible YHWH prepared two copies, one representing each party.

⁴⁵ See Exodus 32:1-36

⁴⁶ See Exodus 32:9-14,30-33, 33:12-17

⁴⁷ See Exodus 33:18-23, 34:5-9

⁴⁸ See the discussion of this covenant in section **9.3 The Covenant of Performance** of the paper “**True Worship of the True God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

⁴⁹ See Exodus 34:29-35

⁵⁰ See Exodus 35:1-36:1

⁵¹ See Exodus 36:2-39:43; see the discussion of this in section **2. What did Moses Write?**

⁵² See Exodus 29:1-37

types of sacrifice⁵³ were in place. This implies that the material we have recorded in Leviticus chapters one through seven was given to Moses in the temporary tent of meeting during the construction of the Tabernacle. Later the Book of Leviticus contains notice of other material delivered at Mount Sinai:

The LORD spoke to Moses [at] Mount Sinai, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you ...” (Leviticus 25:1 ESV)

This suggests that some or all of the material that we have in Leviticus chapter twenty-five was delivered in the temporary tent of meeting at Mount Sinai. Leviticus chapter twenty-six contains the original **specification of blessings and curses** which were associated with the Sinai Covenant. It is very possible that the material of this chapter was originally part of the **Book of the Covenant**:

These are the statutes [with the mish^epatim, even the torah]⁵⁴ that the **LORD made between himself and the people of Israel through Moses [at] Mount Sinai**. (Leviticus 26:46 ESV)

The last notice is not so clear:

These are the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses for the people of Israel [at] Mount Sinai. (Leviticus 27:34 ESV)

Since it is most probable that NOT all the didactic material in Leviticus was given at Mount Sinai, **it is unlikely that this was added as a close to the Book of Leviticus**. It is more likely that the comment relates to the content of chapter twenty-seven. Chapter twenty-seven comprises **instructions on “vows”**. On **four occasions**, “all the people” had agreed that they would “obey my voice” and “keep my covenant”.⁵⁵ **The agreement to keep the covenant is a “vow”**. This material on “vows” was probably given in the temporary tent of meeting and communicated to the people so they would understand the significance of their commitment.

Moses was very busy during the period of the construction of the Tabernacle. He probably reviewed daily reports on the progress. He had to deal with the ongoing affairs of the people.⁵⁶ But he still spent time in the temporary tent of meeting communicating with YHWH. During this time, no doubt, he began to formulate plans for the documents to be produced. Possibly assembling the source material to produce “Genesis”. Possibly recording the material we have in Exodus chapters one through eleven. Possibly planning the structure of the documents to be produced. However it occurred, clearly God inspired Moses to come up with plans to produce the documents that have come down to us. But **it is unlikely that Moses had time to complete any documents at Horeb**.

While the Israelites were still at Horeb, God’s intention was that they would go straight to the Promised Land and perform the conquest under the leadership of Moses. The implementation of the plans for the documentation, and further revelation of material, by YHWH, to be included in the documents, would therefore originally have been planned to be carried out in the Promised Land.

6.5 The Preparations to Leave Horeb

The Tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month in the second year after leaving Egypt. On that day, **Moses performed a dual ceremony**: first the Tabernacle and its accoutrements were consecrated;⁵⁷ then, Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the Priesthood.⁵⁸ Since **Moses was the principal actor in both parts of this ceremony**, it is unlikely that he personally wrote down the description of it. More likely he had one or more observers carefully record events as they unfolded. The consecration of the priests went on for another six days⁵⁹ while Moses was busy with other things, notably offerings by tribal chiefs, which went on for twelve days.⁶⁰ Again, it is **most likely that these events were recorded at Moses’ direction by an observer**.

⁵³ For a discussion of these sacrifices see section **10.1 Efficacy of Sacrifices in the Old Testament** and **Excursus 6 – Terminology of Sacrifices** in the paper “**True Worship of the True God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

⁵⁴ The Hebrew is הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וְהַתּוֹרָה - haḥuqqim w^ehmmish^epatim w^ehatoroth, “the statutes and the mish^eatim, even the torah”. Again, *torah* includes statutes and *mish^eatim*, so it is best taken as an apposition.

⁵⁵ See Exodus 19:8, 20:19, 24:3,7

⁵⁶ See Exodus 18:13-26

⁵⁷ See Exodus 40:1-38

⁵⁸ See Leviticus 8:1-34

⁵⁹ See Exodus 29:35, Leviticus 8:35-36

⁶⁰ See Numbers 7:1-88

Once Aaron and his sons had completed the seven days of their consecration, Moses directed Aaron in the **first public worship service** in the Tabernacle.⁶¹ Very soon after this service, the **deaths of Nadab and Abihu** occurred.⁶² Immediately following their deaths the instructions for the **Day of Atonement** were given.⁶³ Given the **importance and the personal nature of this material**, it is possible that Moses personally wrote the record of it – this may be implied by the statements:

The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died, and the LORD said to Moses, “**Tell Aaron your brother** not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. ... And **Moses did as the LORD commanded**. (Leviticus 16:1-2a, 34b ESV)

The **Book of Numbers** then records the observance of the Passover and institution of second Passover,⁶⁴ the first census,⁶⁵ the organization of the camp and the march,⁶⁶ the organization and responsibilities of the Levites,⁶⁷ the construction and use of the two silver trumpets,⁶⁸ and the actual setting of the march and the beginning of the march.⁶⁹ **There is no explicit indication as to how this material was recorded.** Moses may have personally written some or all of it, or he may have had others actually do the writing. Almost certainly the material was recorded in the ongoing event log and later edited into the developing documentation set. This was a very busy time for Moses, but also a very exciting time as he and the Israelites looked with eager anticipation of **fulfilling their goal and entering the Promised Land**.

7. In the Wilderness

The journey from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea would have taken at least a couple of months.⁷⁰ During this period three significant incidents are reported:

- The people complain for lack of meat; Moses is distraught; Quail are provided for a month; YHWH punishes some with a plague,⁷¹
- Seventy “elders” are identified to assist Moses; the Holy Spirit is distributed to them,⁷²
- Miriam and Aaron challenge Moses;⁷³ Miriam is punished.⁷⁴

The recording of these incidents follows the pattern previously observed in the Book of Exodus. There was **no time pressure during the travel from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea**, so at each campsite a full log of events would be recorded. Similarly, events recorded at Kadesh-barnea are reported:

- The spies are sent into the land of Canaan,⁷⁵
- The spies return with an evil report; Caleb and Joshua dissent,⁷⁶
- The people rebel; **YHWH threatens to apply the covenant curses and destroy all the people**; Moses intercedes; YHWH acquiesces but pronounces a **death sentence on all the armed men**, and commands Moses to lead the people back into the wilderness,⁷⁷
- The people “repent”; they attempt to enter Canaan without YHWH’s help; many die.⁷⁸

⁶¹ See Leviticus 9:1-24, and the discussion of this service in section **3. The Intercessory Role of the Aaronic Priesthood** of the paper “**To Be a Priest**” located on www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

⁶² See Leviticus 10:1-20

⁶³ See Leviticus 16:1-34, see also the discussion of the relationship between the deaths of Nadab and Abihu and the Day of Atonement in section **6.2 The Book of Leviticus** of the paper “**To Be a Priest**” located on www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

⁶⁴ See Numbers 9:1-14

⁶⁵ See Numbers 1:1-46

⁶⁶ See Numbers 2:1-34, note that this organization implies military training had been provided – the fighting men now comprised an army.

⁶⁷ See Numbers 1:47-53, 3:5-51, 4:1-49, 8:5-26

⁶⁸ See Numbers 10:1-10

⁶⁹ See Numbers 9:15-23, 10:11-36

⁷⁰ The distance is about 220 miles, so a minimum of 10 to 15 days of travel (Deuteronomy 1:2); at least 30 days were spent at Kibroth-hattaavah (Numbers 11:19-20); they “remained at Hazeroth” for an unspecified period, but more than a week (Numbers 11:35, 12:15).

⁷¹ See Numbers 11:1-15, 18-23, 31-33

⁷² See Numbers 11:16-17, 24-30

⁷³ The pretext of the “challenge” is Moses’ “Cushite” wife, a woman from Nubia, south of Egypt. Rohl (TT pages 310-318, EE pages 184-187) makes reference to information on this woman.

⁷⁴ See Numbers 12:1-15

⁷⁵ See Numbers 13:1-24

⁷⁶ See Numbers 13:25-33, 14:6-9

⁷⁷ See Numbers 14:1-5, 10-38

⁷⁸ See Numbers 14:39-45

This turn of events changed everything from a documentation perspective. Now Moses would have thirty-eight years to fulfill his plans for documentation. During these years, YHWH would reveal to Moses the material that would otherwise have been provided in the Promised Land. **Moses was thus able to incorporate all the material into the documentation set that has come down to us.**

7.1 The Book of Leviticus

It is possible that Moses first envisioned a document covering the narrative material and the integrated didactic material from Exodus chapter twelve through Numbers chapter ten. **This material would have formed a coherent document.** However, as more didactic material was revealed to Moses, he apparently changed his plan, dividing the material differently and **incorporating the didactic material topically.** This is **most obvious with the Book of Leviticus.**⁷⁹

The **narrative material in Leviticus** follows in a straight-forward manner from the Book of Exodus – the events all take place at Horeb. However, in the book of Leviticus as we have it **there is a large amount of didactic material was clearly NOT at first integrated with the narrative.** This is first obvious in chapter sixteen:

The LORD spoke to Moses **after the death of the two sons of Aaron**, when they drew near before the LORD and died ... (Leviticus 16:1 ESV)

This catchline **ties the events of chapter sixteen directly to the events of chapter ten.** The point of chapter ten is the object lesson of the effect of the “unclean” coming in contact with the “Holy”: **You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean ...** (Leviticus 10:10 ESV)

The intervening chapters, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15, contain instructions on “**physical cleanliness**” which is a **prerequisite to “holiness”.** There is **no further narrative in the Book of Leviticus**, it is **all didactic material related to “holiness”:**

- Chapters 17, 18, 19, and 20 provide instruction on “holiness for the people”
- Chapters 21 and 22 provide instruction on “holiness for the priests”
- Chapters 23, 24, 25 provide instruction on “holiness for the community”
- Chapters 26 and 27 provide instruction on “holiness and the Sinai Covenant”

The Book of Leviticus is the most tightly structured book of the Pentateuch – it is possible that Moses and Aaron collaborated to produce the book. It is clear that the volume of didactic material in Leviticus interrupts the flow of narrative material. This has resulted in the separation of the narrative material of Exodus and Numbers.

7.2 Other Didactic Material

The material we have in **Numbers chapters five and six** seems to also follow the pattern of the later didactic material in Leviticus. **Numbers chapters three and four** contain the instruction for the Levites prior to leaving Horeb – information required for the march. Chapter five begins with a comment indicating that the Levites were performing their duties and presupposing **the teaching on leprosy in Leviticus** chapters thirteen and fourteen, didactic material added to Leviticus during the wandering years. The rest of chapters five and six continue to provide **didactic material related to the ongoing duties of the Levites**, not related to the march:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Command the people of Israel that they put out of the camp everyone who is leprous or has a discharge and everyone who is unclean through contact with the dead. You shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell.” And **the people of Israel did so**, and **put them outside the camp**; as the LORD said to Moses, so the people of Israel did. (Numbers 5:1-4 ESV)

From the last comment, “**the people of Israel did so**”, it is clear that the document as we have it was put together during the thirty-eight years of wandering. When this material was inserted into the narrative, the Israelites were wandering in the dessert under the death penalty. Chapter six ends with **Aaron’s**

⁷⁹ See [Appendix 2 – Outline of Leviticus](#) and the discussion the contents of the book in section [6.2 The Book of Leviticus](#) both in the paper “**To be a Priest**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca
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blessing of the people – a reminder that God would accomplish his Plan in spite of the death sentence and condemnation to wander:

The **LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron and his sons,** saying, ‘Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,

The LORD bless you and keep you;

the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.’

So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.” (Numbers 6:22-27 ESV)

Chapters seven through ten recount the final activities at Horeb and the actual departure. **Chapters eleven and twelve** recount events on the march from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea. Similarly, **chapter fourteen** of Numbers contains the **death sentence on the men of military age** and the command to wander in the desert. Then **chapter fifteen** contains **didactic material on sacrifices**, but twice **reiterates the promise** of the inheritance of the Promised Land:

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, **When you come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving you** ...

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, **When you come into the land to which I bring you** and when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall present a contribution to the LORD. (Numbers 15:1-2, 17-19 ESV)

The Plan of God would be fulfilled, but **the people were required to learn from God’s teaching**. The sin of rebellion exhibited by the people in the abortive attempt enter the promised land is then brought into focus. **Unintentional sin can be atoned for** according to the sacrificial system:

But **if you sin unintentionally**, and do not observe all these commandments that the LORD has spoken to Moses ... all the congregation shall **offer** one bull from the herd for **a burnt offering**, a pleasing aroma to the LORD, with its **grain offering** and its **drink offering**, according to the [mish^apat],⁸⁰ and one male goat for a **sin offering**. And **the priest shall make atonement** for all the congregation of the people of Israel, and **they shall be forgiven** ... (Numbers 15:22, 24b-25a ESV)

However, **willful sin** such as rebellion, **incurs the death penalty**, this is emphasized by **an object lesson**:

But **the person who does anything with a high hand**, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and **that person shall be cut off** from among his people. Because **he has despised the word of the LORD** and has broken his commandment, **that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.**”

And the LORD said to Moses, “The man shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.” And **all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones**, as the LORD commanded Moses. (Numbers 15:30-31, 35-36 ESV)

After the object lesson is recounted, **an instruction on remembering** is given:

The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments ... **So you shall remember** and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. (Numbers 15:37-38a, 40 ESV)

Next, in **chapters sixteen and seventeen**, the Book of Numbers reports the only two significant events of the thirty-eight years of wandering: the **rebellion of Korah**⁸¹ and the **budding of Aaron’s rod**⁸² – a demonstration of God’s will. God choose Aaron and his descendants as priests and the Levites as the “priestly” tribe:

And the LORD said to Moses, “Put back the staff of Aaron before the testimony, **to be kept as a sign for the rebels**, that you may make an end of their grumblings against me, **lest they die.**” (Numbers 17:10 ESV)

Then follows in **chapters eighteen and nineteen another didactic section** – detailed instruction for priests and Levites to carry out their duties. **The material thus far in the Book of Numbers follows the same pattern as the Book of Leviticus**: narrative interspersed with later didactic material. It was likely assembled by Moses during the wilderness period. **After this, the Book of Numbers skips to the end of wilderness period.**

⁸⁰ Here *mish^apat* relates to the nature of God, “justness”, which the people are to learn through the sacrificial system.

⁸¹ See Numbers 16:1-50; see also. the discussion of this incident in section **10.2 Corruption of Sacrifices** in the paper “True Worship of the True God” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

⁸² See Numbers 17:1-11

7.3 The Final March and the Plains of Moab

Most of the remainder of the Book of Numbers was probably extracted from the daily records kept camp by camp as the Israelites made their way to the Plains of Moab east of the Jordan River looking into the Promise Land, and in the Plains of Moab. They were in the Plains of Moab for about six months. The reported events are:

- Death of Miriam in the Wilderness of Zin (at or near Kadesh-barnea),⁸³
- Moses and Aaron receive a death sentence for striking the rock,⁸⁴
- The king of Edom refuses passage and attacks Israel,⁸⁵
- Aaron dies at Mount Hor; Eleazer is invested as High Priest,⁸⁶
- The second Battle of Arad, this time successful with YHWH's help,⁸⁷
- Rounding Edom, the people complain for lack of food and water; YHWH sends "fiery serpents"; Moses makes the "bronze serpent",⁸⁸
- The journey from Obboth to Bamoth in the region of Moab,⁸⁹
- Defeat of Amorite kingdoms of Sihon and Og,⁹⁰
- King Balak of Moab in conjunction with the "elders of Midian" hire Bil'e'am to curse Israel; YHWH forces Bil'e'am to bless Israel,⁹¹
- Israel is drawn into participation of Ba'al of Peor worship; YHWH brings a plague on the people; Phinehas acts to stop the plague,⁹²
- The second census is taken; all fighting men of the Exodus generation are dead,⁹³
- Daughters of Zelophehad petition for and are granted inheritance rights,⁹⁴
- Moses is told to look across the Jordan at the Promised Land before his death, and to invest Joshua to lead the people,⁹⁵
- Phinehas leads a contingent of the army to take vengeance on Midian,⁹⁶
- Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh settle in lands east of the Jordan River,⁹⁷
- Instructions for the division of the land west of the Jordan River are given.⁹⁸

The Bil'e'am narratives pose a puzzle: how did any Israelite obtain them? Bil'e'am was formally engaged by the **king of Moab** and the "**elders of Midian**",⁹⁹ so it is almost certain that **their scribes recorded** the interactions to obtain his services and the oracles which Bil'e'am pronounced. Only Bil'e'am himself could have provided the information on the incident of the donkey and the angel of YHWH. One can only speculate how this was compiled into one or more documents, but most likely the material fell into the hands of **Phinehas** when the Israelites defeated the Midianites and killed Bil'e'am.¹⁰⁰

Numbers **chapters twenty-eight and twenty-nine** contain some final instructions from YHWH through Moses for the **implementation of the sacrificial system** in the Promised Land. The instructions relate to the **public sacrifices** to be offered on behalf of the "**people of Israel**" by the Priests and Levites on the Sabbath, on new moons, on each appointed time [*mo'ed*] and each feast [*hag*]. This information would have been communicated to Moses in the Tent of Meeting and duly recorded. Similarly, Numbers **chapter thirty contains** additional instructions on the **execution of vows**.

⁸³ See Numbers 20:1

⁸⁴ See Numbers 20:2-13

⁸⁵ See Numbers 20:14-21

⁸⁶ See Number 20:22-29

⁸⁷ See Numbers 21:1-3

⁸⁸ See Numbers 21:4-9, 2 Kings 18:4, John 3:14

⁸⁹ See Numbers 21:10-20

⁹⁰ See Numbers 21:21-35

⁹¹ See Numbers chapters 22, 23, and 24

⁹² See Numbers 25:1-18

⁹³ See Numbers 26:1-65

⁹⁴ See Numbers 27:1-11, 36:1-12

⁹⁵ See Numbers 27:12-23

⁹⁶ See Numbers 31:1-54

⁹⁷ See Numbers 32:1-42

⁹⁸ See Numbers 34:1-29, 35:1-34

⁹⁹ See Numbers 22:2-6

¹⁰⁰ See Numbers 31:1-12

Numbers **chapter thirty-three** contains a most interesting document:

These are the stages of the people of Israel, when they went out of the land of Egypt by their companies under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. **Moses wrote down** their starting places, stage by stage, by command of the LORD, and these are their stages according to their starting places. (Numbers 33:1-2 ESV)

This material is explicitly extracted from the daily records of the Exodus and wilderness experience. It is important to note that in verses three and five, the word “**Rameses**” is a later scribal update to the original document. At the time that the Israelites had been in Egypt, the city was known as “**Avaris**”. Rameses was a later city built on the same site. The campsites mentioned along the route to Horeb, in verses five through fifteen, are more or less identical to the sites listed elsewhere in Exodus and Numbers. Similarly, the sites listed along the final approach to the Plains of Moab, in verses forty-one to forty-nine are more or less identical to those listed elsewhere in Numbers. **The sites mentioned in verses sixteen through thirty-seven represent the thirty-eight years of wandering.** Most of these sites are NOT mentioned elsewhere and have not been identified. When Moses is briefly summarizing the trip, he states:

So **you remained at Kadesh many days**, the days that you remained there. Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness by [**Way of Yam Suph**], as the LORD told me. And **for many days we traveled around Mount Seir.** (Deuteronomy 1:46, 2:1 ESV)

Mount Seir is the territory of Edom. The **territory of Edom** extended from south of the Dead Sea towards but not including the coast of Yam Suph (the Gulf of Aqaba). The “**Way of Yam Suph**” is the road down the east side of the territory of Edom down to Yam Suph. The Israelites had been in Kadesh-barnea. After the incident of the spies, they spent considerable time there, then were commanded by YHWH to return to the wilderness. The “**wilderness**” is identified by “**for many days we traveled around Mount Seir**”. This suggests that they traveled from west to east between the southern extremity of Edom and north of Yam Suph to the east side of Yam Suph, and back again, possibly more than once. Thus, the camp sites of the thirty-eight years would be located east of the Gulf of Aqaba and in the Sinai Peninsula.

The last half of the Book of Numbers, **chapters twenty to thirty-six**, is structured very differently from the first half – most of it is a straight-forward account of the events from Kadesh-barnea to the Plains of Moab.. **It appears to be mostly extracted from the daily camp logs.** The **Bil’am narratives** are unique. **Chapters twenty-eight, twenty-nine, and thirty** are the only real didactic material, and it is simply inserted – there is not the conscious effort to integrate the material as was obvious in the earlier chapters of Numbers. Chapters **thirty-four** and **thirty-five** could be considered “didactic”, but they are essential instructions for the division of the Promised Land. **Chapter thirty-six** ties back to chapter twenty-seven, and clarifies a general point, which is again critical for life in the Promised Land:

The inheritance of the people of Israel shall not be transferred from one tribe to another, for every one of the people of Israel shall hold on to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. (Numbers 36:7 ESV)

It is **most likely that the second half of Numbers was assembled under the auspices of Joshua** either during the thirty days of mourning for Moses¹⁰¹ or after the Israelites had crossed into the Promised Land. However it was assembled, **it was done under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit** to contain exactly the information God intended us to have.

8. The Book of Deuteronomy

The Book of Deuteronomy is clearly different from the other Mosaic material that we have considered so far. **The document as we have it is very specific as to the nature and the purpose of its contents:**

These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness ... Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses undertook **to explain this [torah]**, saying, “The LORD our God said to us ... ‘See, I have set the land before you. Go in and **take possession of the land** that the **LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob**, to give to them and to their offspring after them.’ ...” (Deuteronomy 1:1, 5-6a, 8 ESV)

¹⁰¹ See Deuteronomy 34:8
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The Book of Deuteronomy contains “**the words that Moses spoke**” – it is a record of many speeches made by Moses. Moses’ purpose was explicit “**to explain this torah**” – it was his final attempt to help the people understand the teaching that had been delivered from YHWH through himself so that the people of Israel might live by the Way of God and accomplish his purpose. The purpose of God was to fulfill the promises that he “**swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob**”.

Only YHWH could speak to the entire camp of Israel as he had done to deliver the Ten Commandments. In section **6.3 The Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant**, there was discussion of a possible process that Moses could have used to communicate with the entire people. A similar process could have been used for the speeches we have in the Book of Deuteronomy. When Moses began the speeches, he had about one month to live.¹⁰² **Moses’ death is recorded as the last event in the Book of Deuteronomy, so he clearly did NOT have time to assemble the recorded speeches into the final document.** Most likely it was under the auspices of Joshua that the document was assembled at some time later, during or after the conquest.

8.1 The Structure of the Book of Deuteronomy

In most places the contents of Deuteronomy are presented as **first-person quotations from Moses**. This is consistent with actual records of presented speeches. **It is impossible to be precise on the exact content of any particular speech or to specify exactly how many speeches there were.** All that can be said is that each speech would have been accurately recorded, validated, and then presented to the entire camp of Israel by the Elders, Levites, and Priests who comprised the actual audience to whom Moses spoke. This process took about one month. Later these recorded speeches were assembled, sometimes topically, sometimes verbatim, in whole or in part, into the document as we have it. Joshua is the most likely person to have overseen the compilation process. **All of this was done under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.**

The **first twelve chapters of Deuteronomy** are the explicit realization of Moses’ stated objective “**to explain this torah**”. This material is more or less equivalent to the Gospel Message of the New Testament.¹⁰³ The material starts out “**these are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel ...**”.¹⁰⁴ Similar words occur more than a dozen times.¹⁰⁵ **These are clearly records from multiple speeches of Moses.**

Chapters thirteen through twenty-five are largely topical. The material is more or less an expansion and elucidation of the **Book of the Covenant**.¹⁰⁶ It also contains **many allusions to didactic material in Leviticus and Numbers**. This material was clearly extracted from multiple speeches and arranged deliberately to expand upon and elucidate the earlier material.¹⁰⁷

Chapters twenty-six and twenty-seven contain explicit instructions for **three worship ceremonies to be performed in the Promised Land**. Deuteronomy 26:1-11 describes a “**firstfruits**” ceremony. It is not explicitly stated, but this ceremony was probably intended as an elaboration of the Feast of Harvest of Firstfruits. Deuteronomy 26:12-15 contains a ceremony to be performed every third year when the “**shared tithe**” was distributed. This ceremony would likely have been intended to occur at the Feast of Tabernacles. **These were to be ongoing ceremonies from year to year.** The purpose of them is explicitly stated – the ceremonies were an affirmation of the commitment to the Sinai Covenant:

You have declared today that the LORD is your God, and that you will **walk in his ways**, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his [mish^apatim],¹⁰⁸ and **will obey his voice**.
(Deuteronomy 26:17 ESV)

Deuteronomy **chapter twenty-seven** is a **one-time ceremony** to be conducted once in the Promised Land on **Mount Ebal** and **Mount Gerizim**. The performance of the ceremony is recounted in Joshua

¹⁰² See the chart “**Wilderness Timeline**” at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/chronological-charts>

¹⁰³ For a detailed analysis and discussion of this material, see the paper “**The Words of Eternal Life**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

¹⁰⁴ See Deuteronomy 1:1

¹⁰⁵ See Deuteronomy 1:3,5,9, 3:18, 4:1, 5:1, 6:1, 8:1, 10:12, 11:1-2,8,13,18,26, 12:1,8,32

¹⁰⁶ See section **6.3 The Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant**

¹⁰⁷ For an analysis of the material, see **Excursus 5 – Analysis of Deuteronomy Chapters 13-25**

¹⁰⁸ In this context, *mish^apatim* implies the wisdom, the understanding, the discernment, that come from living by the “statutes” and the Ten Commandments – The Way of God.

chapter 8 verses 30 through 35 – this may have been the occasion for which the Book of Deuteronomy was assembled.¹⁰⁹ Note that **it is explicitly stated that the “Elders” and “Levites” participated with Moses in delivering the material to the people:**

Now Moses **and the elders of Israel** commanded the people ... Then Moses **and the Levitical priests** said to all Israel ... (Deuteronomy 27:1a, 9a ESV)

The ceremony of **chapter twenty-seven** recounts **twelve curses**. This provides a segue into **chapter twenty-eight** which contains an elaboration of the **“blessings and curses”** presented in Leviticus chapter twenty-six. **This material is didactic as well as prophetic.**

Chapters twenty-nine and thirty contain what appear to be **Moses’ climactic speech**. **The Covenant of Life** is a brand-new covenant, **distinct from the Sinai Covenant**, between YHWH and each individual Israelites and **each True Worshipper of God in the years to come:**¹¹⁰

These are **the words of the covenant** that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, **besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb.**

You are standing today, **all of you**, before the LORD your God: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, **all the men of Israel**, your **little ones**, your **wives**, and the **sojourner** who is in your camp, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, so that you may enter into **the sworn covenant of the LORD your God, which the LORD your God is making with you today** ...

It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant, but with **whoever is standing here with us today** before the LORD our God, **and with whoever is not here with us today.**
(Deuteronomy 29:1, 10-12, 14-15 ESV)

Chapter thirty-one and thirty-two are tied contextually. Deuteronomy 31:1 appears to begin **Moses’ final speech** – he recounts the end of his service, and enjoins faith in YHWH under the leadership of Joshua:

So **Moses continued to speak these words** to all Israel. And he said to them,
“I am 120 years old today. I am **no longer able to go out and come in**. The LORD has said to me, **‘You shall not go over this Jordan.’ The LORD your God himself will go over before you.** ... “
Then Moses summoned **Joshua** and said to him in the sight of all Israel,
“Be strong and courageous, for **you shall go with this people** into the land that the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it. ...”
(Deuteronomy 31:1-3a, 7 ESV)

Moses gives final instructions for the **Priests and Levites to teach the people**. **“This torah”** is the same as in chapter one verse five – **the teaching of God delivered through Moses** starting with the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant:

... the priests, the sons of Levi ... **you shall read this [torah] before all Israel** in their hearing. **Assemble the people**, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner **within your towns**, that **they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God**, and **be careful to do all the words of this [torah]**, and that their **children**, who have not known it, **may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God** ...
(Deuteronomy 31:9aβ, 11b-13a)

Moses is told by YHWH to write a song warning the people of impending apostasy, and teach the song to them – **the song is recorded in chapter thirty-two:**

And the LORD said to Moses ... Now therefore **write this song** and **teach it to the people of Israel**. Put it in their mouths, that **this song may be a witness** for me against the people of Israel. For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, **they will turn to other gods** and serve them, and despise me and **break my covenant.** (Deuteronomy 31:16a, 19-20 ESV)

Moses is given his last instruction by YHWH and his death is recorded:

That very day the **LORD spoke to Moses**, “Go up this mountain ... And **die on the mountain** ...” So **Moses** the servant of the LORD **died there in the land of Moab** ... (Deuteronomy 32:48-49aα, 50aα, 34:5a ESV)

Between YHWH’s final instructions and Moses’ death is recorded **Moses’ final blessing of the Tribes** of Israel in Deuteronomy **chapter thirty-three** – this positioning may be a literary device. **It is, however, clear that Moses was delivering speeches right up until his death.** Therefore, it is clear that **he could not have assembled the material into a book.** Harrison asserts that all of the material we have in the

¹⁰⁹ See the discussion of Joshua chapter eight in section **10.1 Early References**.

¹¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the contents of this covenant, see section **5. The Covenant of Life**, in the paper “**Covenants of Grace**” located on www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

Pentateuch could have been assembled by the end of the Joshua period.¹¹¹ It is most likely that the material was reviewed, selected, and assembled under the auspices of Joshua. In all this, **the individuals doing the work were guided by the Holy Spirit.**

8.2 Deuteronomy as a Covenant Document

It has long been recognized that **the Book of Deuteronomy**, as we have it, **is more or less structured along the lines of an ancient covenant document.**¹¹² In the ancient world, there developed traditional forms for covenant documents.¹¹³ The components of an ancient covenant document are as follows (not all components are explicitly used in all covenants):

- Preamble: identifies the suzerain and the vassal
- Historical prologue: briefly reviews the prior relationship between the suzerain and the vassal; establishes the suzerain's right to impose the covenant
- Stipulations: the obligations to which the vassal agrees by entering into the covenant, benefits from the suzerain may also be specified
- Documentation: location of covenant documents and provision for public reading
- Witnesses: the formal third-party witnesses to the covenant agreement
- Blessings and curses: the results of keeping or breaking the covenant
- Covenant meal: the participants may share a meal which is often accompanied by sacrifices

The Book of Deuteronomy can be easily conformed to this structure:

- Preamble: Deuteronomy 1:1-5
- Historical Prologue: Deuteronomy 1:6-4:43
- General Stipulations: Deuteronomy 4:44-12:32
- Specific Stipulations: Deuteronomy 13:1-25:19
- Documentation: Deuteronomy 31:9-13, 19-30
- Witnesses: Deuteronomy 26:1-19, 31:1-8, 14-18, 32:1-47
- Blessings and curses: Deuteronomy 27:1-26, 28:1-68
- Covenant Meal (spiritual): Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20
- Appendix: Deuteronomy 32:48-52, 33:1-29, 34:1-12

The Book of Deuteronomy contains no explicit allusion to the standard covenant structure. It is however possible that, being well known, the covenant structure was automatically used, perhaps subconsciously.

9. Documents Identified in the Writings of Moses

Throughout the Pentateuch there are tantalizing references to “books” and “writing”. Some of these have been referred to in the foregoing sections of this paper. They are all reviewed in this section.

There are several important Hebrew words to consider:

- כָּתַב - *kathav*, a verb, meaning “to write”, “to record”, “to enroll”¹¹⁴
- מִכְתָּב - *mik^etav*, a noun, derived from *kathav*, meaning “a writing”, “the thing written”
- סָפַר - *saphar*, a verb, meaning “to count”, “to recount”¹¹⁵
- סֵפֶר - *sepher*, a masculine noun, related to *saphar*, meaning “writing”, “book”, “document”
- סִפְרָה - *siph^erah*, a feminine noun, with the same meaning as *sepher*

The first occurrence of one of these words is:

This is the book (*sepher*) of the [histories] (*toledoth*) of Adam. (Genesis 5:1)

¹¹¹ See Harrison (IOT) page 541

¹¹² See the discussion of this in Craigie pages 20-24, 38-44, 79-83.

¹¹³ See IDB volume 1 page 714 and Bibliography page 723; for an overview, see the article “Suzerainty” located at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suzerainty>

¹¹⁴ See TWOT article 1053 page 458

¹¹⁵ See TWOT article 1540 page 632

This is the second “tablet” discussed in the section [תולדות - toledoth 3.1](#). If this document was originally a “clay” tablet, it is clear that the material upon which the writing exists is secondary. In most cases in the Old Testament, a *sepher* is a scroll of leather or papyrus.

[9.1 Book of the Wars of YHWH](#)

Next, after the defeat of the Amalekites at Rephidim, the following is recorded:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “**Write (kathav) this as a memorial in a book (sepher)** and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, **The LORD Is My Banner**, saying, “A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.” (Exodus 17:14-16 ESV)

The use of the quotation in verse sixteen is reminiscent of another quotation:

Therefore it is said in **the Book (sepher) of the Wars of the LORD**,
“Waheb in Suphah, and the valleys of the Arnon,
and the slope of the valleys that extends to the seat of Ar,
and leans to the border of Moab.” (Numbers 21:14-15 ESV)

The record of the war with Amalek was probably also recorded in the “**Book of the Wars of YHWH**”. It is possible the this is the name that was given to the daily log of activities kept by Moses.

[9.2 The Book of the Covenant](#)

Next is the Book of the Covenant, which has already been discussed in section [6.3 The Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant](#):

Moses came and **told the people all the words of the LORD** and all the [mish^epatim].¹¹⁶ And all the people answered with one voice and said, “**All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.**” And Moses **wrote (kathav) down all the words of the LORD**. ... Then he took the **Book (sepher) 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.” (Exodus 24:3-4a, 7 ESV)

The Book of the Covenant is identified as a distinct and recognizable document. **The interplay between oral presentation, “the words of YHWH”, and the record of those words is notable:**

- First, YHWH delivers the material orally to Moses
- Then, Moses presents the material orally to the people
- The people agree and verbalize their acceptance of YHWH’s spoken requirements
- Then, under inspiration, Moses writes down all the words of YHWH, the Book of the Covenant
- Using the new document, Moses reads YHWH’s words back to the people
- The people agree that the written record is acceptable, that it is the same as the oral presentation to which they had agreed

This is a vivid demonstration of the relationship between written documents and oral statements in the ancient world. The spoken word was considered the “master”. The written document was only of value as a record of what had been spoken. We see another example of this in the **Jerusalem conference** recorded in Acts chapter fifteen:

Then **it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas**. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, **with the following letter**:

“The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, **to the brothers who are of the Gentiles** in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, **having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul**, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, **who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth**. ...” (Acts 15:22-27 ESV)

Once a decision was made, it was **NOT considered sufficient** to inform those affected only by written word, but **it was necessary** to also send duly accredited witnesses **to orally confirm the written word**.

¹¹⁶ In this context, *mish^epatim* implies the explanation of the Way of God, the objective of living by the “words of YHWH”.
Wednesday, May 22, 2024

9.3 The Ten Commandments and the Covenant of Performance

The setting of the delivery of the Ten Commandments has been briefly discussed in section [6.3 The Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant](#). **Consistent with standard practice, the Ten Commandments were first spoken by YHWH to the people**, so that all were aware of their contents. **Only afterwards was a written record prepared** as a witness to the spoken word. The Ten Commandments on the tablets of stone were written by YHWH:

The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the [torah], [even]¹¹⁷ the commandment, **which I have written (kathav) for their instruction.**” ... And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, **written (kathav) with the finger of God.** ... Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets that were **written (kathav) on both sides**; on the front and on the back **they were written (kathav).** The tablets were the work of God, and **the writing (mik’tav) was the writing (mik’tav) of God,** engraved on the tablets. (Exodus 24:12, 31:18, 32:15-16 ESV)¹¹⁸

Moses smashed the original tablets to demonstrate to the Israelites that the covenant was broken. Then he successfully petitioned YHWH NOT to destroy the people, and YHWH instructed Moses to prepare new stone tablets to replace the broken ones:

The LORD said to Moses, “Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I **will write (kathav) on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets,** which you broke. (Exodus 34:1 ESV)

Following this, YHWH gave to Moses insight into the Plan of God. YHWH made in unequivocal commitment to accomplish his purpose. The **Covenant of Performance** was briefly discussed in section [6.4 On the Mountain and in the Tent of Meeting](#). Note that **Moses was explicitly told to make a written document containing the words of this covenant:**

And the LORD said to Moses, “**Write (kathav) these words,** for in accordance **with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.**” (Exodus 34:27 ESV)

The **summary of this covenant** has been passed on to us in Exodus 34:10-26. It is very brief – most likely the complete document contained more. **After making this commitment** to perform his purpose, not only to Moses and the Israelites, but also to all True Worshipers of all time, **YHWH re-wrote the Ten Commandments on Moses’ tablets:**

So he was there **with the LORD** forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And **he wrote (kathav) on the tablets the words of the covenant,** the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 34:28 ESV see also Deuteronomy 10:1-5)

The Ten Commandments are the succinct definition of the Way of God. God delivered them by spoken word directly to the people of Israel – the people were frightened by hearing the voice of God. Only after the oral presentation were the Ten Commandments committed to writing – on stone, the most durable writing material. When the people broke the covenant, the stone tablets were smashed. Before rewriting the Ten Commandments on new stone tablets, YHWH enter into, and had Moses write down, the Covenant of Performance, by which **YHWH guaranteed that he would accomplish his plan of teaching the Way of God to all humanity.**

9.4 The Book of This torah

In his final speeches, Moses uses the phrase, “the Book of This torah”, on several occasions. There is much debate as to exactly what is being referenced. Some contend that is a reference to the Book of Deuteronomy, or some part of the book. This is unlikely because the material we have in the Book of Deuteronomy probably existed at that time only as discreet records of Moses’ speeches. **More likely, material we have in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and the first part of Numbers existed as identifiable documents on several scrolls.** Moses’ audience, comprising Elders, Priests, and Levites, would be familiar with these scrolls. As he is speaking, Moses makes explicit reference to the scrolls, possibly lifting them up as a demonstration of that to which he is referring:

If you are not careful to do **all the words of this [torah]** that are **written (kathav) in this book (sepher),** that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, then the LORD will bring on you

¹¹⁷ See footnote [43](#)

¹¹⁸ The parallel verses in Deuteronomy contain similar wording, see Deuteronomy 4:13, 5:22, 9:10

and your offspring ... Every sickness also and every affliction that is not **recorded (kathav) in the book (sepher) of this [torah]** ... (Deuteronomy 28:58-59a, 61a ESV)

In recounting the curses associated with the **Covenant of Life**,¹¹⁹ Moses makes reference to **the curses originally prescribed in Leviticus chapter twenty-six**:

The LORD will not be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and his jealousy will smoke against that man, and **the curses written (kathav) in this book (sepher)** will settle upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven. And the LORD will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for calamity, in accordance with **all the curses of the covenant written (kathav) in this Book (sepher) of the [torah]**. ... Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, bringing upon it **all the curses written (kathav) in this book (sepher)**. (Deuteronomy 29:20-21, 27 ESV)

As with Leviticus chapter twenty-six,¹²⁰ in the Covenant of Life, **the prospect of repentance** is presented with return to the teaching of the Book of the Torah:

For **the LORD will again take delight in prospering you**, as he took delight in your fathers, **when you obey the voice of the LORD your God**, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are **written (kathav) in this Book (sepher) of the [torah]**, **when you turn to the LORD your God** with all your heart and with all your [mind]. (Deuteronomy 30:9b-10 ESV)

The description of **Moses' final speech** and **commission to the Priests and Levites** affirms Moses as the "author" of the Book of the *Torah* and his passing-on the control of the documents and the teaching of the content:

Then **Moses wrote (kathav) this [torah]** and gave it to **the priests, the sons of Levi**, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all **the elders of Israel**. And Moses commanded them,

At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall **read this [torah] before all Israel in their hearing**. ...

When **Moses had finished writing (kathav) the words of this [torah] in a book (sepher)** to the very end, Moses commanded the **Levites** who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD,

"Take this Book (sepher) of the [torah]" and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that **it may be there for a witness against you**. ..."

(Deuteronomy 31:9-11, 24-26 ESV)

In verse nine, the verbs are "imperfect" which implies ongoing action – the writing and the giving are part of the same act. The translation would be better as, **"and Moses writing this torah and giving it to the priests ..."**. **The reference is to the existing scrolls, NOT the contents of the Book of Deuteronomy**. Since it is clear that the corpus of Moses' writings comprised several scrolls, it would probably be more accurate to translate **"sepher"** as **"documentation"** rather than "book".¹²¹

9.5 The Book of Life

After the golden calf incident, Moses offers himself as a sacrifice to atone for the sin of the people. YHWH declines the offer, but accepts Moses' efforts, and establishes **the fundamental principle of "individual responsibility"**.¹²²

The next day Moses said to the people, "You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the LORD; **perhaps I can make atonement for your sin**." So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, **if you will forgive their sin**—but if not, please **blot me out of your book (sepher) that you have written (kathav)**." But the LORD said to Moses, **"Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book (sepher)**. ..."

(Exodus 32:30-33 ESV)

This is the first reference in the Bible to the Book of Life. There may be an actual "book" in a spiritual sense in eternity which God maintains; or, it may be simply a "metaphor" for the list of identities of the True Worshipers of God. The Great Creator can maintain the identities of the multiple billions of stars in the multiple billions of Galaxies in the universe; so, maintaining the list of names of True Worshiper would be a very simple matter:

To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? **says the Holy One**.
Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?

¹¹⁹ See the discussion of the Covenant of Life in section **8.1 The Structure of the Book of Deuteronomy**.

¹²⁰ Deuteronomy twenty-eight does NOT contain a provision for repentance.

¹²¹ See the discussion in section **10.1 Early References**

¹²² See also Ezekiel 3:16-21, 18:1-32, 33:1-20

He who brings out their host by number, **calling them all by name**;
by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing. (Isaiah 40:25-26 ESV)

David makes three references to the Book of Life. First, he acknowledges the existence of God's record of the suffering in this life and considers this **a basis for faith** in God's promises:

You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle.

Are they not in your book (siph'rah)?

Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call.

This I know, that God is for me.

In God, whose word I praise, in the LORD, whose word I praise, in God I trust; **I shall not be afraid.**

What can man do to me? (Psalm 56:8-11 ESV)

In spite of his faith, **at times things were very bleak for David.** He had to trust God not only for spiritual salvation, but also for **daily deliverance from enemies**, imploring God to deny them status in the **Book of Life**, which David explicitly states to be a **"roll of the righteous"**:

Save me, O God!

For **the waters have come up to my neck.**

I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold;

I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me.

I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched.

My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.

More in number than the hairs of my head are **those who hate** me without cause;

mighty are **those who would destroy me**, those who attack me with lies.

For they persecute him whom you have struck down,

and they recount the pain of those you have wounded.

Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you.

Let them be blotted out of the book (sepher) of the living;

let them not be enrolled among the righteous. (Psalm 69:1-4a, 26-28 ESV)

In the end, **David looked back on the hand of God in his life.** He is awe-struck at the beneficence of God to guide his life and **maintain his status in the Book of Life from the beginning**:

O LORD, **you have searched me and known me!**

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; **you discern my thoughts** from afar.

You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works; my [mind] knows it very well.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret,

intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed substance;

in your book (sepher) were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me,

when as yet there was none of them. (Psalm 139:1-6, 13-16 ESV)

Isaiah alludes to the Book of Life in a prophecy of the New Israel:

And **he who is left** in Zion and remains in Jerusalem **will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life** in Jerusalem ... (Isaiah 4:3 ESV)

Daniel is explicit that **those whose names are written in the Book of Life will participate in the First Resurrection** and **"turn many to righteousness"**:

At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And **there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been** since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, **everyone whose name shall be found written in the book (sepher).**

And **many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life**, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And **those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky** above; and **those who turn many to righteousness**, like the stars forever and ever. (Daniel 12:1-3 ESV)

The **Book of Malachi** comments that **the faithful remnant** preparing for the First Advent **are recorded in the Book of Life**, **"a book of remembrance"**, and **will belong to YHWH** when he makes up his **"treasured possession"**, a dual allusion to the Sinai Covenant and the First Resurrection:

Then **those who feared the LORD** spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and **a book (sepher) of remembrance was written (kathav) before him of those who feared the LORD and**

esteemed his name. **“They shall be mine,** says the LORD of hosts, **in the day when I make up my treasured possession,** and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. ...”
(Malachi 3:16-17 ESV)

The **Apostle Paul** affirms that the **names of Christians are recoded in the Book of Life:**

I entreat **Euodia** and I entreat **Syntychē** to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with **Clement** and the rest of **my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.** (Philippians 4:2-3 ESV)

The **Book of Revelation** is replete with references to the Book of Life:

The **one who conquers** will be clothed thus in white garments, and **I will never blot his name out of the book of life.** I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

Also **it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.** And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, **everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life** of the Lamb who was slain.

The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth **whose names have not been written in the book of life** from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then **another book was opened, which is the book of life.** And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but **only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.**

(Revelation 3:5, 13:7-8, 17:8, 20:12, 15, 21:27 ESV)

“The Book of Life” contains the list of human beings who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit which makes an individual a “begotten” member of the God Family. For all those human beings who have lived by The Way of God and died down through the ages since Abel; after death, God makes the decision whether or NOT to grant that individual **the gift of eternal life.** At the First Resurrection, those to be given **the gift of eternal life** will be raised up with “spirit bodies” and will become full members of the God Family. For those True Christians who are alive when the resurrection occurs, whose names are in the “Book of Life”, God will make the decision at that time whether or NOT to grant **the gift of eternal life,** and they will also participate in the First Resurrection.

Moses was clear that his name could be removed from the Book of Life. God explicitly told Moses the conditions under which a name is removed from the Book of Life: **“Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book”** – this implies a choice of living by the way of sin. David also was clear on the effect of his name’s removal from the Book of life:

Cast me not away from your presence, and **take not your Holy Spirit from me.** (Psalm 51:11 ESV)

9.6 Miscellaneous Documents

There remain a number of documents either explicitly mentioned or alluded to. Particularly interesting is the **“copy of the torah”** which kings were to make:

When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, **‘I will set a king over me,** like all the nations that are around me,’ **you may indeed set a king over you** whom the LORD your God will choose.

And **when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write (kathav) for himself in a book (sepher) a copy of this [torah], approved by the Levitical priests.** And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by **keeping all the words** of this [torah] and these statutes, **and doing them** ... (Deuteronomy 17:14-15a, 18-19 ESV)

Some commentators contend that this provision was added later, possibly by Samuel.¹²³ But **there is no reason Moses could NOT have spoken this in the Plains of Moab.** The concept of kingship was very old, and Moses had already noted that there were by his time many Edomite kings, and Israel so far had had none.¹²⁴ The concept of a **“ruler of the people”** had also been previously discussed.¹²⁵ So, **assuming**

¹²³ Actually, Samuel’s concerns were quite different from Moses’ concerns, see 1 Samuel 8:10-18, 10:25a. Samuel warned that a king would use the people and national resources for his own purposes. Moses is concerned that the king remains faithful to The Way of God.

¹²⁴ See Genesis 36:31-39

these are the inspired words of Moses, what exactly is he suggesting that the king should make a copy of? Whatever is to be copied, **the Levites are to be involved** – probably providing the original and proofing the copy. It is unlikely that the king would be required to include all narrative material from Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Certainly, the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant would be included, and also some of the other didactic material such as Leviticus chapters seventeen through twenty. We can only speculate on the exact contents, but it seems likely that there was **a well-defined set of material**, that would fit on **a single scroll**, that a king could copy and read, in order to **“learn to fear YHWH his God by keeping all the words of this torah and these statutes, and doing them”**.

Similar to this is the copy of the *torah* which was to be written on large stones on Mount Ebal:

Now Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, “Keep the whole commandment that I command you today. And on the day you cross over the Jordan to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, **you shall set up large stones and plaster them with plaster**. And you shall **write (kathav) on them all the words of this [torah]**, when you cross over to enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you. And when you have crossed over the Jordan, **you shall set up these stones, concerning which I command you today, on Mount Ebal**, and you shall plaster them with plaster. And there you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. You shall wield no iron tool on them; you shall build an altar to the LORD your God of uncut stones. And you shall offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God, and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and shall eat there, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God. And you shall **write (kathav) on the stones all the words of this [torah] very plainly.**”
(Deuteronomy 27:1-8 ESV)

Clearly some extract, similar to but likely smaller than the king’s copy, is intended. An even smaller written extract is enjoined on the people once in the Promised Land:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your [mind] and with all your might. And **these words that I command you today shall be on your heart**. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall **write (kathav) them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates**.

You shall therefore **lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your [mind]**, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall **write them (kathav) on the doorposts of your house and on your gates** ... (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:18-20 ESV)

The focus of what Moses is saying here is to **internalize the teaching which defines the Way of God**. Whatever was to be written on doorposts and gates was to be a reminder – almost any selection of the material we have in the Pentateuch would serve this purpose, but clearly only a small selection could be written on a given “doorpost” or a given “gate”.

The **“Song of Moses”** is explicitly identified as having been independently written down and circulated as an independent document:

Now therefore **write (kathav) this song and teach it to the people of Israel**. Put it in their mouths, that **this song may be a witness** for me against the people of Israel. For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant.

And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, **this song shall confront them as a witness** (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring). For I know what they are inclined to do even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give.

So **Moses wrote (kathav) this song the same day and taught it to the people of Israel**.
(Deuteronomy 31:19-22 ESV)

We have a record of the song in Deuteronomy chapter thirty-two. The independent existence of some or all of the “poetic” material in the writings of Moses¹²⁶ is actually quite likely. This kind of material

¹²⁵ See Exodus 22:28b

¹²⁶ For example, Genesis 49:2-27, Exodus 15:1b-18, Deuteronomy 33:2-29

lends itself to memorization and presentation through singing. The Book of Jashar¹²⁷ may well have been a collection of such poetic material.

Another independent document is the **Wilderness Itinerary**. This document is discussed in section **7.3 The Final March and the Plains of Moab**:

These are **the stages of the people of Israel**, when they went out of the land of Egypt by their companies under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. **Moses wrote (kathav) down their starting places**, stage by stage, by command of the LORD, and these are their stages according to their starting places. (Numbers 33:1-2 ESV)

One final document is identified in Numbers chapter five. The “book” is a material from which the writing can be erased. The ink is erasable. The writing is intended to be temporary:

Then the priest shall **write (kathav) these curses in a book (sepher)** and wash them off into the water of bitterness. And he shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that brings the curse ... (Number 5:23-24a ESV)

The Writings of Moses as we have them reflect many other documents and a complicated literary history. Throughout the documentation set, the person of Moses looms large. The documents as we have them reflect a long history of transmission and translation. The internal witness of the documents themselves and the external witness of later documents are unequivocal, **these are rightly called the Writings of Moses**.

10. References to the Writings of Moses

The Writings of Moses are the foundation of the entire Bible. The **historic material** written after the time of Moses, makes many explicit references to the writings of Moses. The **Wisdom Literature** can be summarized as a commentary on the Ten Commandments – living by the Way of God. The message of the **Writing Prophets** was largely that Israel had NOT lived according to the Writings of Moses; and, had, thus, brought the covenant curses on themselves. This is contrasted with the **prophecies of what the world will be like when all nations and all people do live according to the Writings of Moses**. The New Testament Gospel message is more or less an elaboration and elucidation of the Writings of Moses.

The following subsections briefly review the references and allusions to the Writings of Moses in the Old Testament. References and allusions in the New Testament are discussed in the following section. **All witnesses are unanimous in attributing to Moses the documentation set we call the Writings of Moses**.

10.1 Early References

In the summary of **YHWH’s charge to Joshua**, it is made it clear that Joshua’s success is entirely dependent on his faithfulness to YHWH as defined by the writings of Moses:

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, **the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun**, Moses’ assistant,

Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. ... No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.

Only **be strong and very courageous**, being careful to **do according to all the [torah] that Moses my servant commanded you**. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.

This Book (sepher) of the [torah] shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall **meditate on it day and night**, so that you may **be careful to do according to all that is written (kathav) in it**. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

(Joshua 1:1-2, 5, 7-8 ESV)

At this point all the writings of Moses were extant – in some form. The material of Genesis was more or less as we have it today. The material we have in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers was more or less as we have it, although its structure may have been different. The material to be compiled into Deuteronomy consisted of discreet records of Moses’ speeches.

¹²⁷ See Joshua 10:12-14, 2 Samuel 1:17-27
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The phrase “**this book of the torah**” is in Hebrew:

הַזֶּה	הַתּוֹרָה	סֵפֶר
hazzeh	hatorah	sepher
the this	the torah	book of

The plural form of *sepher*, סִפְרִים - *s^epharim*, is used for “books” only in two instances:

The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. **Of making many books (s^epharim) there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.** (Ecclesiastes 12:11-12 ESV)

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, by descent a Mede, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans—in the first year of his reign, **I, Daniel, perceived in the books (s^epharim) the number of years** that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. (Daniel 9:1-2 ESV)

All other instances of the plural, *s^epharim*, refer to “letters”.¹²⁸ Therefore, the use of the singular, *sepher*, cannot be pressed to mean that the entire corpus of Moses’ writings consisted of a single scroll. In this context, **the singular could perhaps be more accurately translated by a word like “documentation” – “this documentation of the torah”.**

The **Book of Joshua chapter eight** contains a record of Joshua’s carrying out Moses’ instructions for the **ceremony on Mounts Ebal and Gerizim**. This occurred a short period of time after entry into the Promised Land:

(30-31) At that time **Joshua built an altar** to the LORD, the God of Israel, **on Mount Ebal**,¹²⁹ just **as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded** the people of Israel, **as it is written (kathav) in the Book (sepher) of the [torah] of Moses, “an altar of uncut stones, upon which no man has wielded an iron tool.”**¹³⁰ And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings.

(32) And there, in the presence of the people of Israel, **he wrote (kathav) on the stones a copy of the [torah] of Moses, which he had written (kathav).**

(33) And all Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, **just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at the first**, to bless the people of Israel.

(34) And afterward **he read all the words of the [torah], the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written (kathav) in the Book (sepher) of the [torah].**

(35) There was **not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read** before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them. (Joshua 8:30-35 ESV)

The phrase “**the sepher of the torah of Moses**” in **verse thirty-one** refers to material we have in the Book of Exodus – the instructions on altar construction contained in the Book of the Covenant and alluded to in Moses’ instructions reported in Deuteronomy. **Verse thirty-two** explicitly states that Joshua carried out Moses’ instruction to inscribe the stela.¹³¹ As discussed in section **9.6 Miscellaneous Documents**, the “**copy of the torah of Moses**” would have comprised an extract of material we have in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. **Verse thirty-three** records that Moses’ instruction for the ceremony were carried out.

After the ceremony, Joshua continued to teach the people: verses thirty-four and thirty-five may imply that the material we have in the Book of Deuteronomy had been more or less compiled. Joshua read “**all the words of the torah**” which sounds like an allusion to Moses’ statement “**to explain this torah**”.¹³² This is qualified by “**the blessing and the curse**” which sounds like an allusion to the material in Deuteronomy chapter twenty-eight. This material is now included in “**the documentation of the torah**”. The material of the Book of Deuteronomy is clearly referred to by the statement: “**not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read**”. The material we have in Exodus, Leviticus,

¹²⁸ See 1 Kings 21:8, 2 Kings 10:1, 20:12, Esther 1:22, 3:13, 8:10, 9:20,30, Isaiah 39:1, Jeremiah 29:25

¹²⁹ The remains of this altar have apparently been found, see the article “**Joshua’s Altar on Mount Ebal: Israel’s Holy Site Before Shiloh**” located at <https://www.thetorah.com/article/joshuas-altar-on-mount-ebal-israels-holy-site-before-shiloh>

¹³⁰ See Exodus 20:25, Deuteronomy 27:5

¹³¹ See Deuteronomy 27:2-4

¹³² See Deuteronomy 1:5

and Numbers is never presented as something “Moses commanded” but always as “YHWH’s words”. **The material in the Book of Deuteronomy is always presented as the words of Moses to explain and elucidate the words of YHWH.**

When Joshua was getting old,¹³³ he, like Moses, made one final attempt to help the people continue to live by the Way of God:

... **you have seen all that the LORD your God has done** to all these nations for your sake, for it is the LORD your God who has fought for you. Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west. The LORD your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight. And you shall possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you.

Therefore, **be very strong to keep and to do all that is written (kathav) in the Book (sepher) of the [torah] of Moses,** turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left ... (Joshua 23:3-6 ESV)

By this time the writings of Moses were a well known and well-established corpus. Joshua then goes on to mediate the **cutting of a new covenant** between YHWH with the people – **the Covenant of Fidelity**.¹³⁴ After the covenant was affirmed, Joshua included the description of it in the **“documentation of the torah of YHWH”**. Joshua clearly did not consider this to be “closed corpus”:

And **Joshua wrote (kathav) these words in the Book (sepher) of the [torah] of God.** (Joshua 24:26a ESV)

When **Gideon** is commissioned by YHWH, he makes a reference to the record of the Exodus contained in the writings of Moses:

And Gideon said to him, “Please, my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us?

And **where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted (saphar)** to us, saying, ‘**Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?**’ But now the LORD has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian.” (Judges 6:13 ESV)

When David moved the Ark into the tent in Jerusalem, he was careful to ensure that **the required service at the Ark and also at the Tabernacle** continued as specified in the Writings of Moses:

So David left Asaph and his brothers there **before the ark of the covenant** of the LORD to minister regularly before the ark **as each day required**, and also Obed-edom and his sixty-eight brothers, while Obed-edom, the son of Jeduthun, and Hosah were to be gatekeepers.

And he left **Zadok the priest** and his brothers the priests **before the tabernacle** of the LORD in the high place that was **at Gibeon** to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering regularly morning and evening, **to do all that is written (kathav) in the [torah] of the LORD that he commanded Israel.** (1 Chronicles 16:37-40 ESV)

In David’s charge to Solomon, he is explicit that **the promise of dynastic longevity is conditional upon living by the Way of God** as specified in the Writings of Moses:

When **David’s time to die drew near**, he commanded Solomon his son, saying, “I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, and **keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways** and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his [mish’patim], and his testimonies, **as it is written (kathav) in the [torah] of Moses**, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, **that the LORD may establish his word** that he spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons pay close attention to their way, **to walk before me in faithfulness** with all their heart and with all their [mind], **you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.**’ ...” (1 Kings 2:1-4 ESV)

Grant to Solomon my son a whole heart that he may **keep your commandments, your testimonies,** and **your statutes**, performing all, and that he may build the [temple] for which I have made provision. (1 Chronicles 29:19 ESV)

King **Jehoshaphat** (870-849BC), of Southern Israel, is generally accounted a “good” king.¹³⁵ One action accredited to him was to **establish the teaching of the torah**:

In the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, **to teach in the cities of Judah**; and with them the **Levites**, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah; and with these Levites, the **priests** Elishama and Jehoram. And **they taught** in Judah, having **the Book (sepher) of the [torah] of the LORD** with them. **They went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.** (2 Chronicles 17:7-9 ESV)

¹³³ See Joshua 23:1-2

¹³⁴ See the discussion of this covenant in section 6. *The Covenant of Fidelity*, of the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

¹³⁵ See 1 Kings 22:41-46, 2 Chronicles 17:1-6

Jehoiada's wife **Jehoshabeath/Jeosheba**, a daughter of King Ahaziah, saved baby Joash/Jehoash from Athaliah.¹³⁶ When Athaliah was killed and Joash enthroned, **Jehoiada was careful to refer to the**

Writings of Moses as he instituted reforms:

And Jehoiada posted watchmen for the house of the LORD under the direction of the **Levitical priests** and the **Levites** whom David had organized to be in charge of the house of the LORD, **to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, as it is written (kathav) in the [torah] of Moses**, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David. (2 Chronicles 23:18 ESV)

While **Jehoiada**, as the High Priest, was alive and advising **Joash/Jehoash**, King of Southern Israel (835-796BC), Joash reigned well. He repaired the Temple and restored the Temple service.¹³⁷ To finance the repairs **he resorted to the "census tax" imposed in the Writings of Moses:**

The LORD said to Moses, "**When you take the census of the people of Israel**, then **each shall give a ransom for his life** to the LORD when you number them, that there be no plague among them when you number them. Each one who is numbered in the census shall give this: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), **half a shekel as an offering to the LORD**." (Exodus 30:11-13 ESV)

So **the king commanded**, and they made a chest and set it outside the gate of the house of the LORD. And **proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem** to bring in for the LORD **the tax that Moses the servant of God laid on Israel in the wilderness**. And all the princes and all the people rejoiced and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until they had finished. (2 Chronicles 24:8-10 ESV)

Once Jehoiada died, Joash came under the influence of his contemporaries, and he turned away from God. As a result, he was attacked by Hazael of Damascus, and left severely wounded, he was killed by his own people.¹³⁸ His son, **Amaziah**, was made king. One of his first acts was to avenge the death of his father, but he was careful to do it within the bounds specified in the Writings of Moses:

Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, **nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers**. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin. (Deuteronomy 24:16 ESV)

Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, began to reign. ... And as soon as the royal power was firmly in his hand, **he struck down his servants who had struck down the king his father**. But **he did not put to death the children of the murderers**, according to what is **written (kathav) in the Book (sepher) of the [torah] of Moses**, where the LORD commanded, "Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. But **each one shall die for his own sin**." (2 Kings 14:1b, 5-6 ESV)

And as soon as the royal power was firmly his, he killed his servants who had struck down the king his father. But he did not put their children to death, **according to what is written (kathav) in the [torah], in the Book (sepher) of Moses**, where the LORD commanded, "Fathers shall not die because of their children, nor children die because of their fathers, but each one shall die for his own sin." (2 Chronicles 25:3-4 ESV)

In the **final summation of the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom**, the author of Second Kings says the following which is reminiscent of the **Covenant of Life**:¹³⁹

The **LORD made a covenant with them** and commanded them, "**You shall not fear other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them**, but you shall fear the LORD, **who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm**. You shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice. And the statutes and the [mish'patim] and the [torah] and the commandment that he wrote for you, you shall always be careful to do. **You shall not fear other gods, and you shall not forget the covenant that I have made with you. You shall not fear other gods**, but you shall fear the LORD your God, and he will deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies." However, **they would not listen**, but they did according to their former manner. (2 Kings 17:35-40 ESV)

From the Covenant of Life:

These are the words of the covenant that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb. And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: "You have seen **all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt**, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land ... Why has the LORD done thus to this land? **What caused the heat of this great anger?**" Then people will say, 'It is because **they abandoned the covenant of the LORD**, the God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, and **went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they had not**

¹³⁶ See 2 Kings 11:1-3, 2 Chronicles 22:1-12

¹³⁷ See 2 Kings 12:4-16, 2 Chronicles 24:4-14

¹³⁸ See 2 Kings 12:17-21, 2 Chronicles 24:15-27

¹³⁹ See the discussion in section 5. *The Covenant of Life* of the paper "Covenants of Grace" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

known and whom he had not allotted to them. Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, bringing upon it all the curses written in this book (sepher) ... (Deuteronomy 29:1-2, 24b-27 ESV)

All through the period of the Judges and the period of the Kings, the Writings of Moses were explicitly recognized as the defining authority for the Nation of Israel. The nation fell into cursing whenever it failed to follow the teaching of Moses. There were periodic reforms to revert back to following the Way of God. The two most far-reaching reforms were under Hezekiah and Josiah.

10.2 The Reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah

The ascension of Tiglath-pileser to the throne of Assyria in 745BC changed forever the political landscape of Israel. Immediately prior to this, under kings Jeroboam II, in the North, and Uzziah/Azariah, in the South, Israel had experienced a “golden age” with physical prosperity comparable to the times of Solomon. In spite of this resurgence, Israel was no match for Assyria. Tiglath-pileser was coming west – it was inevitable that Israel would come under his sway. In the political mess in Northern Israel which followed the death of Jeroboam II, the incompetent king, Menahem, appealed to Tiglath-pileser, “Pul”, to support his position. This established Northern Israel as a vassal of Assyria:

In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah, Menahem the son of Gadi began to reign over Israel, and he reigned ten years in Samaria. And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not depart all his days from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin. Pul the king of Assyria came against the land, and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that he might help him to confirm his hold on the royal power. Menahem exacted the money from Israel, that is, from all the wealthy men, fifty shekels of silver from every man, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back and did not stay there in the land. (2 Kings 15:17-20 ESV)

This vassal arrangement ultimately led to the destruction of the Northern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom ultimately fared no better. Another weak king, Ahaz, of the Southern Kingdom also appealed to Tiglath-pileser to secure his throne:

Then Rezin king of [Aram] and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to wage war on Jerusalem, and they besieged Ahaz but could not conquer him. ... So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, “I am your servant and your son. Come up and rescue me from the hand of the king of [Aram] and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.” Ahaz also took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasures of the king’s house and sent a present to the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria listened to him. (2 Kings 16:5, 7-9a ESV)

This established the Southern Kingdom as vassal to Assyria. Ahaz had a disposition to apostasy and as a vassal of Assyria he had no problem with participating in Assyrian religion:

Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God, as his father David had done, but he walked in the way of the kings of Israel. He even burned his son as an offering, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, he saw the altar that was at Damascus. And King Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest a model of the altar, and its pattern, exact in all its details. And Uriah the priest built the altar; in accordance with all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, so Uriah the priest made it, before King Ahaz arrived from Damascus. And when the king came from Damascus, the king viewed the altar. Then the king drew near to the altar and went up on it and burned his burnt offering and his grain offering and poured his drink offering and threw the blood of his peace offerings on the altar. ...” (2 Kings 16:2-4, 10-13 ESV)

Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah. This was the religious and political mess that Hezekiah inherited. We are NOT told by whom Hezekiah was taught. Only his mother, Abi, is mentioned. Clearly, she saw to it that his teachers, likely Priests and/or Levites, who were faithful to YHWH, taught Hezekiah well from the Writings of Moses. Also, the influence of Isaiah¹⁴⁰ cannot be discounted:

In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign. He reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done. He removed the high places and broke the pillars

¹⁴⁰ See 2 Kings 19:1-7, 20-26, 20:1-11
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and cut down the Asherah. And **he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made**, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it (it was called Nehushtan).

He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD. He did not depart from following him, but **kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses**. And the LORD was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him. (2 Kings 18:1-7 ESV)

The chronology is a bit difficult. The “third year of Hoshea” is 729BC. Ahaz lived until 715BC, so clearly 729BC is the beginning of Hezekiah’s co-regency with Ahaz. Hezekiah’s sole reign of twenty-nine years was 715-686BC. During the years of co-regency, Hezekiah became intimately familiar with the problems introduced by his father. **Hezekiah’s motivation was to restore the true worship of YHWH**. He wanted to remove all corruptions of paganism. Moses’ “bronze serpent”¹⁴¹ had come to be regarded as an idol; so, it was destroyed.

Hezekiah’s reforms were driven by the writings of Moses:

Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem to keep the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel ... for **they had not kept it as often as prescribed (kathav)**. ... For a majority of the people, many of them from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, **had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than as prescribed (kathav)**. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, “May the good LORD pardon everyone who sets his heart to seek God, the LORD, the God of his fathers, **even though not according to the sanctuary’s rules of cleanness**.” And the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people. (2 Chronicles 30:1, 5b, 18-20 ESV)

And **Hezekiah appointed** the divisions of the **priests** and of the **Levites**, division by division, each according to his service, the priests and the Levites, for **burnt offerings** and **peace offerings**, to minister in the gates of the camp of the LORD and to give thanks and praise. The contribution of the king from his own possessions was for the burnt offerings: the **burnt offerings of morning and evening**, and the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the appointed [times] (mo’ed), **as it is written (kathav) in the [torah] of the LORD**. (2 Chronicles 31:2-3 ESV)

The Chronicler summarizes his efforts:

Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God. And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and **in accordance with the [torah] and the commandments**, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered. (2 Chronicles 31:20-21 ESV)

The influences in the Southern Kingdom which fed the apostasy of Ahaz were unfortunately NOT eradicated by Hezekiah’s reform. **Hezekiah’s son was Manasseh** – the worst king in the history of the Southern Kingdom. The corruptions promulgated under Manasseh rendered the nation irretrievable:

Then the LORD said to me, “**Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people**. Send them out of my sight, and let them go! And when they ask you, ‘Where shall we go?’ you shall say to them, Thus says the LORD:

‘Those who are for pestilence, to pestilence,
and those who are for the sword, to the sword;
those who are for famine, to famine,
and those who are for captivity, to captivity.’

I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, declares the LORD: the sword to kill, the dogs to tear, and the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy. And **I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth because of what Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, did in Jerusalem**. ...” (Jeremiah 15:1-4 ESV)

Although Manasseh apparently repented,¹⁴² it was too late for the nation. His son Amon reverted to Manasseh’s evil ways,¹⁴³ and was killed by his subjects, who made **his eight-year-old son, Josiah, king**.

There is no explicit statement as to who influenced Josiah. As with Hezekiah his mother is identified:

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. **His mother’s name was Jedidah** the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And **he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father**, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left. (2 Kings 22:1-2 ESV)

¹⁴¹ See Numbers 21:4-9

¹⁴² See 2 Chronicles 33:10-16

¹⁴³ See 2 Kings 21:19-23, 2 Chronicles 33:21-24

Josiah's desire to serve YHWH was kindled when he was very young:

For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David his father, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, and the carved and the metal images. ... Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had cleansed the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz, the recorder, **to repair the house of the LORD his God.** (2 Chronicles 34:3, 8 ESV)

As with Hezekiah, **Josiah's motivation was to restore the true worship of YHWH.** He wanted to remove all corruptions of paganism. **During the repairs of the Temple, the famous "book" was discovered:**

While they were bringing out the money that had been brought into the house of the LORD, **Hilkiah the priest found the Book (sepher) of the [torah] of the LORD given through Moses.** Then Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the secretary, **"I have found the Book (sepher) of the [torah] in the house of the LORD."** And Hilkiah gave the book (sepher) to Shaphan. Shaphan brought the book (sepher) to the king, and further reported to the king, "All that was committed to your servants they are doing. They have emptied out the money that was found in the house of the LORD and have given it into the hand of the overseers and the workmen." Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, **"Hilkiah the priest has given me a book (sepher)."** **And Shaphan read from it before the king.**

And **when the king heard the words of the [torah],** he tore his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, "Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, **concerning the words of the book (sepher)** that has been found. For **great is the wrath of the LORD** that is poured out on us, because **our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written (kathav) in this book (sepher).**" (2 Chronicles 34:14-21 ESV see also 2 Kings 22:8-13)

Based on this description, it is impossible to be sure what exactly was found. Clearly it was a writing of Moses. It was clear to Josiah, that Israel had NOT followed the teaching in the "book" and was therefore in line for YHWH's wrath. Many commentators contend that the "book" was in fact the Book of Deuteronomy. The evidence for this is very thin.¹⁴⁴ The strongest piece of evidence for the identity of the "book" is that it is called **"The Book of the Covenant"**:

Then the king sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him. And the king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And **he read in their hearing all the words of the Book (sepher) of the Covenant (b^erith) that had been found in the house of the LORD.** And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant (b^erith) before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his [mind], to **perform the words of this covenant (b^erith) that were written (kathav) in this book (sepher).** And all the people joined in the covenant (b^erith). (2 Kings 23:1-3 ESV see also 2 Chronicles 34:29-31)

The **"Book of the Covenant"** is clearly identified:

And **Moses wrote (kathav) down all the words of the LORD.** ... **Then he took the Book (sepher) of the Covenant (b^erith) 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." (Exodus 24:4, 7 ESV)

It is possible that the "book" found in the Temple was **a scroll containing the "Book of the Covenant"** (Exodus 20:22-26, and chapters 21, 22, and 23); as well as some of the **narrative and didactic material around the Passover** (Exodus 12:1-20, 43-49, 13:3-10) and perhaps the description of the **covenant ratification ceremony** (Exodus 24:1-11). **Leviticus chapter twenty-six**, and possibly other material from Leviticus, could also have been included.¹⁴⁵

And the king commanded all the people, **"Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written (kathav) in this Book (sepher) of the Covenant (b^erith)."** (2 Kings 23:21 ESV)

So Hilkiah and those whom the king had sent went to Huldah the prophetess ... And she said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Tell the man who sent you to me, **Thus says the LORD,** Behold, **I will bring disaster** upon this place and upon its inhabitants, **all the curses that are written in the book (sepher) that was read before the king of Judah.** (2 Chronicles 34:22a, 23-24 ESV)

But **if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, if you spurn my statutes ... but break my covenant,** then **I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic ... I will set my face against you ...** And **if in spite of this you will not listen to me,** then **I will discipline you again sevenfold** for your sins, and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.

¹⁴⁴ See Harrison (IOT) pages 43-46, Craigie pages 46-49 (although Craigie in the end endorses the Deuteronomy theory).

¹⁴⁵ In section 9. *Documents Identified in the Writings of Moses*, we have already discussed several possible extracts from the larger documentation set which could be a single scroll.

And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit. (Leviticus 26:14-20 ESV)

Moreover, **Josiah put away the mediums and the necromancers** and the household gods and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, **that he might establish the words of the [torah] that were written (kathav) in the book (sepher) that Hilkiah the priest found** in the house of the LORD. (2 Kings 23:24 ESV)

Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God. ... **A man or a woman who is a medium or a necromancer shall surely be put to death.** They shall be stoned with stones; their blood shall be upon them.. (Leviticus 19:31, 20:27 ESV)

As with Hezekiah, **Josiah's reforms** were driven by the Writings of Moses:

When the service had been prepared for, the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their divisions according to the king's command. And **they slaughtered the Passover lamb**, and the priests threw the blood that they received from them while the Levites flayed the sacrifices. And they set aside the burnt offerings that they might distribute them according to the groupings of the fathers' houses of the lay people, to offer to the LORD, **as it is written (kathav) in the Book (sepher) of Moses.** And so they did with the bulls. (2 Chronicles 35:10-12 ESV)

The Chronicler summarizes Josiah's efforts:

So **all the service of the LORD was prepared that day**, to keep the Passover and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, according to the command of King Josiah. And the people of Israel who were present **kept the Passover** at that time, **and the Feast of Unleavened Bread** seven days. No Passover like it had been kept in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet. **None of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as was kept by Josiah**, and the priests and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 35:16-18 ESV)

In spite of reforming efforts, both the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom continued in apostasy and were driven into exile. There was never an organized return to the Northern Kingdom, although many Israelites remained in the land and no doubt many individual groups returned over the years. **It was God's intention to restore a remnant community in the South to prepare for the First Advent.** This was accomplished, and Nehemiah and Ezra were instrumental in restoring the worship of YHWH.

10.3 The Restoration of Nehemiah and Ezra

In 539BC when Persia had put an end the hegemony of Babylon, as prophesized by Jeremiah,¹⁴⁶ Daniel prayed for God's forgiveness of the nation and that the Jeremiah's prophecies of restoration might be fulfilled.¹⁴⁷ The crux of Daniel's prayer was **the apostacy of Israel from the teaching of God as recorded in the Writings of Moses:**

I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the **great and awesome God**, who **keeps covenant [b'rith] and [hesed]** with those who **love him and keep his commandments**, we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and [mish'patim]. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and **to all Israel**, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, **because of the treachery that they have committed against you.** To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because **we have sinned against you.**

To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for **we have rebelled against him and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his [torah]**, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. **All Israel has transgressed your [torah]** and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And **the curse and oath that are written (kathav) in the [torah] of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us**, because we have sinned against him. He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. **As it is written (kathav) in the [torah] of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us;** yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth.

¹⁴⁶ See Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10

¹⁴⁷ See Jeremiah 24:1-7, 29:10-11

Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and we have not obeyed his voice. And now, O Lord our God, **who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand**, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly. (Daniel 9:4-15 ESV)

At this time, **Daniel was very old**. He had been a trusted advisor to all the Kings of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, and he was still held in esteem by the Persian rulers. **His position gave Daniel the opportunity to petition the Persian rulers to allow the Israelite captives to return to the Land of Israel**. He was apparently successful, because very quickly a group under **Sheshbazzar** returned,¹⁴⁸ and they were quickly followed up by a larger group under **Zerubbabel** with **Jeshua/Joshua** a High Priest.¹⁴⁹ The first objective of the returnees was to re-establish the worship of YWWH on the site of the destroyed Temple. **They explicitly looked to the instructions contained in the Writings of Moses to re-establish worship:**

When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, **the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem**. Then arose **Jeshua** the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and **Zerubbabel** the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and **they built the altar of the God of Israel**, to offer burnt offerings on it, **as it is written (kathav) in the [torah] of Moses the man of God**. They set the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands, and **they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, burnt offerings morning and evening**.

And **they kept the Feast of Booths, as it is written (kathav)**, and offered the **daily burnt offerings by number** according to the [mish^epatim], **as each day required**.¹⁵⁰ and after that the regular burnt offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the appointed [times] (mo^ed) of the LORD, and the offerings of everyone who made a freewill offering to the LORD. **From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid.** (Ezra 3:1-6 ESV)

Both Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel made efforts to commence reconstruction of the temple,¹⁵¹ but the work languished until the **Prophets Haggai and Zechariah** arrived; then, the Temple was completed in 515BC in time to keep the Passover.¹⁵² After this, there is no more information on the restored community until **Nehemiah** arrived in 445BC. Nehemiah's primary concern was to build a wall around the small city of Jerusalem which had been rebuilt.¹⁵³ As did Daniel, **Nehemiah prayed for God's blessing alluding to the writings of Moses:**

O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God **who keeps covenant (b^erith) and [hesed] with those who love him and keep his commandments**, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, **confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you**. Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and **have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the [mish^epatim] that you commanded your servant Moses**.

Remember **the word that you commanded your servant Moses**, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, **I will scatter you** among the peoples, but **if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them**, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there **I will gather them** and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.'

They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. **O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant**, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. (Nehemiah 1:5-11a ESV)

Nehemiah made progress on the wall¹⁵⁴ and spent twelve years in Jerusalem as Governor,¹⁵⁵ after which he returned to Persia to request of the King a second term office.¹⁵⁶ This is most likely when he requested help to re-establish the Temple service and the teaching of the Way of God. Artaxerxes

¹⁴⁸ See Ezra 1:8-11, 5:14-16

¹⁴⁹ See Ezra 2:1-2

¹⁵⁰ See Numbers 29:12-38

¹⁵¹ See Ezra 5:16, 3:6-11

¹⁵² See Ezra 5:1-2, 6:19-22

¹⁵³ See Nehemiah 1:1-3, 2:7-8, Haggai 1:9

¹⁵⁴ See Nehemiah 2:9-20, 3:1-32, 4:6,15-23, 6:1,15-16, 7:1, 12:27-43; Josephus notes that the final wall took two years and four months to build (Josephus Antiquities, Book XI, Chapter V, section 8).

¹⁵⁵ See Nehemiah 5:14-19

¹⁵⁶ See Nehemiah 13:6-7

complied by commissioning Ezra to return with a cadre of Priest and Levites.¹⁵⁷ **Ezra is the tip of the iceberg.** We have no information on the process; we can only see the end product: **Ezra brought back with him to Jerusalem the Writings of Moses.** Most commentators feel that what Ezra brought back to Jerusalem is more or less identical with the Writings of Moses we see today. But, there are obvious differences: it was certainly a consonantal text, either Palaeo-Hebrew or Aramaic square script, and the names we use for the books certainly do NOT apply. **This standardization of the Hebrew text certainly was the work of many scribes over many years.** **Ezra is described as follows:**

Now after this, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, **Ezra the son of Seraiah**, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, son of Zerahiah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, **son of Aaron the chief priest**—this Ezra **went up from Babylonia.** **He was a scribe skilled in the [torah] of Moses that the LORD, the God of Israel, had given,** and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the LORD his God was on him.

And there went up also to Jerusalem, in the [thirty-]seventh year¹⁵⁸ of Artaxerxes the king, some of the people of Israel, and **some of the priests and Levites**, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants. And Ezra came to Jerusalem **in the fifth month**, which was in the [thirty-]seventh year of the king. For on the first day of the first month he began to go up from Babylonia, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the good hand of his God was on him. For **Ezra had set his heart to study the [torah] of the LORD, and to do it and to teach** his statutes and [mish^epat]¹⁵⁹ in Israel. (Ezra 7:1-10 ESV)

Ezra most likely arrived in Jerusalem in the summer of 428BC.¹⁶⁰ **By the Fall Feast Season, he was ready to start to teach the people from the Writings of Moses:**

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And **they told Ezra the scribe to bring the [documentation] (sepher) of the [torah] of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel.** So **Ezra the priest brought the [torah] before the assembly,** both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, **on the first day of the seventh month.** And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And **the ears of all the people were attentive to the [documentation] (sepher) of the [torah].**

And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishaël, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. And **Ezra opened the [documentation] (sepher) in the sight of all the people,** for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood.

And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, **the Levites, helped the people to understand the [torah],** while the people remained in their places. **They read from the [documentation] (sepher), from the [torah] of God,** clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.¹⁶¹ (Nehemiah 8:1-8 ESV)

This teaching occurred on the Day of Trumpets – the people had to be reminded that it was a Holy Day, to rejoice. The next day the teaching continued, and the people discovered the provisions for the Feast of Tabernacles:

And **Nehemiah**, who was **the governor**, and **Ezra the priest and scribe**, and the **Levites who taught the people** said to all the people, **“This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.”** For **all the people wept as they heard the words of the [torah].** Then he said to them, **“Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine** and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

On the second day the heads of fathers’ houses of all the people, **with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the [torah].** And **they found it written (kathav) in the [torah] that the LORD had commanded by Moses** that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem ... (Nehemiah 8:9-10, 13-15a ESV)

¹⁵⁷ See Ezra 7:11-26, 8:21-34

¹⁵⁸ See Bright pages 391-402 for a discussion of the chronology of this period.

¹⁵⁹ “mish^epat” is singular here, therefore it implies the character attribute of God, “justness” – a focus of Ezra was to teach the Nature of God.

¹⁶⁰ See Ezra 7:8 – the fifth month, Ab, is July-August

¹⁶¹ Most of the people spoke Aramaic, NOT Hebrew. The reading in Hebrew would NOT have been immediately understandable to them.

Next the people **kept the Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day** and **two days later made a covenant to serve YHWH**:

And day by day, from the first day to the last day, **he read from the [documentation] (sepher) of the [torah] of God**. They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, according to the [mish^epat].¹⁶² (Nehemiah 8:18 ESV)

Now **on the twenty-fourth day of this month** the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads. And **the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners** and stood and **confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers**. And they stood up in their place and **read from the [documentation] (sepher) of the [torah] of the LORD their God** for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they **made confession and worshiped the LORD their God**.

Because of all this **we make a firm covenant**¹⁶³ in writing (kathav); on the sealed document are the names of our princes, our Levites, and our priests. ... **enter into a curse and an oath** to walk in God's [torah] that was **given by Moses the servant of God**, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord and his [mish^epatim] and his statutes. (Nehemiah 9:1-3, 38, 10:29 ESV)

In their public confession of the sins which led to the dissolution of the Nation of Israel and the exile of the people, **there are at least a dozen explicit allusions to the Writings of Moses**.¹⁶⁴ The covenant to which they were committing was to be the basis of the restored remnant community; again, there are at least a dozen allusions to the Writings of Moses.¹⁶⁵ The purpose of the covenant was to guide the remnant community in living by the Way of God. **The covenant specifically addressed certain issues which both Nehemiah and Ezra had worked to reform**.

10.4 The Reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra

When Nehemiah first arrived, he was confronted by **intolerable oppression by some Israelites of other Israelites**. Some had become wealthy while others had become poor. The wealthy were extracting interest from the poor and even committing them to permanent slavery.¹⁶⁶ This was in direct violation of the teaching of Moses:

If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and **you shall not exact interest from him**. ... When you buy **a Hebrew slave**, he shall serve six years, and **in the seventh he shall go out free**, for nothing. (Exodus 22:25, 21:2 ESV see also Deuteronomy 15:12-15)

Nehemiah returned to Persia in 433BC. During this time, is most likely when he arranged with Artaxerxes to have Ezra return to re-establish proper worship. Nehemiah seems to have stayed in Persia a few years because when he returned, he found things had degenerated:

- Tobiah, an Ammonite, had been given quarters in the Temple precincts,¹⁶⁷
- The Levites were NOT being provided with the grain tithe,¹⁶⁸
- The people were doing common work and engaging in commerce on the Sabbath,¹⁶⁹
- Men had married "foreign" women and had children who were not being brought up as Israelites.¹⁷⁰

When Ezra arrived in 428BC, he found the issue of **marriage to foreign women** to be the major impediment to setting the remnant community on a secure footing of service to YHWH:

After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, "**The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations**, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For **they have taken some of their daughters to be wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands**. And in this faithlessness the hand of the officials and chief men has been foremost."

¹⁶² "mish^epat" is again singular, alluding to the purpose of the Feasts to learn the Nature of God.

¹⁶³ The Hebrew phrase is כְּרָתִים אֶמְנָה - kor^ethim 'emanah, "cutting firm agreement": although b^erith is not used, the verb, כָּרַת , is used as a technical term for "cutting", i.e., creating a covenant.

¹⁶⁴ See Nehemiah 9:6-37

¹⁶⁵ See the summary of covenant provisions in Nehemiah 10:28-39

¹⁶⁶ See Nehemiah 5:5

¹⁶⁷ See Nehemiah 2:10, 13:1-9, Deuteronomy 23:3-4

¹⁶⁸ See Nehemiah 13:10-13, Numbers 18:21-24

¹⁶⁹ See Nehemiah 13:15-22, Exodus 20:8-11, 31:12-17, Deuteronomy 5:12-15

¹⁷⁰ See Nehemiah 13:23-27, Deuteronomy 7:1-5

As soon as I heard this, I tore my garment and my cloak and pulled hair from my head and beard and sat appalled. Then **all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel**, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, **gathered around me** while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice. (Ezra 9:1-4 ESV)

In the covenant of 428, the people specifically agreed to avoid foreign marriage:

We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons. (Nehemiah 10:30 ESV)

Based on this, **Ezra moved quickly to deal with the problem** – the covenant was extended to the point of removing foreign wives and children:

And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, addressed Ezra: **“We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land,** but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. Therefore **let us make a covenant (b^crith) with our God to put away all these wives and their children,** according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God, and **let it be done according to the [torah].** Arise, for it is your task, and we are with you; be strong and do it.” Then **Ezra arose and made the leading priests and Levites and all Israel take an oath** that they would do as had been said. So they took the oath.

Then Ezra withdrew from before the house of God and went to the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib, where he spent the night, neither eating bread nor drinking water, for he was mourning over the faithlessness of the exiles. And **a proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the returned exiles that they should assemble at Jerusalem, and that if anyone did not come within three days, by order of the officials and the elders all his property should be forfeited, and he himself banned from the congregation of the exiles.** (Ezra 10:2-8 ESV)

To make this proclamation was within Ezra’s jurisdiction, as specified by Artaxerxes, since it related to a matter of the teaching of God:

And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges who may **judge all the people in the province Beyond the River, all such as know the laws (dath)¹⁷¹ of your God.** And **those who do not know them, you shall teach.** Whoever will not obey the laws (dath) of your God and the law (dath) of the king, **let judgment be strictly executed on him, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of his goods or for imprisonment.** (Ezra 7:25-26 ESV)

The people assembled about three months later, December 528, and agreed to deal with the problem as Ezra required, and by spring they had complied.¹⁷² **This established the authority of Ezra, and after him, the “Levitical scribes”, within the restored community.** The role of the civil governor became less and less important as the “Levitical scribes” assumed actual control of the community. Much later, a new class of scribes arose and usurped authority from the Levitical scribes – we see them in the New Testament as the **Pharisees.**

God’s purpose for the restoration was to have a remnant community of True Worshipers in place for the First Advent. The Messiah had to have a human community of True Worshipers among whom he could grow up as a child.¹⁷³ The work of Nehemiah and Ezra was essential to establish this community. **The basis of their work was the Writings of Moses.**

10.5 References in Wisdom Literature

The wisdom literature is by definition an elaboration of torah. Wisdom can come only from God:

But **where shall wisdom be found?** And **where is the place of understanding?**

Man does not know its worth, and it is not found in the land of the living.

It cannot be bought for gold, and silver cannot be weighed as its price.

God understands the way to it, and he knows its place.

And he said to man,

Behold, **the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,**

and **to turn away from evil is understanding.** (Job 28:12-13, 15, 23, 28 ESV)

There are many ways to analyze the Wisdom Literature – many different themes. The most important is the Nature of God – God’s revelation of himself to humanity. With respect to the Writings of Moses, there are many direct allusions to the contents of the documents. Of special significance are the

¹⁷¹ The speaker here is Artaxerxes; דָּת - dath is a Persian word with a similar range of meaning as the English word “law”, see **TWOT** article 458 pages 199-200.

¹⁷² See Ezra 10:9-17

¹⁷³ See the discussion of this community in section **4.2 The Magnificat of Mary**, in the paper “True Worship of the True God”, located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

allusions to the promises made by God and their fulfillment. **Perhaps most important are the allusion to “conversion” – the imprinting of the *torah* on the “heart”.**

10.5.1 The Nature of God

The recorded revelation to human beings of The Nature of God began with **the second commandment**:

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for **I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing [covenant love] (*hesed*) to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.** (Exodus 20:4-6 ESV)

God does not tolerate any division of loyalty. True Worshipers must be fully committed to serve only the True God. Failure to do this brings on generational curses. But, God is always open to repentance. Anyone who is called by God and repents can be drawn out of the cycle of generational curses. God’s covenant blessings are always available to those who repent.

After the Golden Calf incident, Moses successfully petitioned YHWH NOT to destroy the people. **Moses asked YHWH to reveal to him more deeply his nature.** YHWH complied:

And [YHWH] said to Moses, “This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for **you have found favor in my sight**, and I know you by name.” Moses said, “Please show me your glory.” And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will **proclaim before you my name ‘[YHWH]’.** And I will be **gracious to whom I will be gracious**, and will **show mercy on whom I will show mercy.**

[YHWH] descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and **proclaimed the name of [YHWH].** [YHWH] passed before him and proclaimed, **“[YHWH], [YHWH], a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in [*hesed*] and faithfulness, keeping [*hesed*] for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”** (Exodus 33:17-19, 34:5-7 ESV)

These themes, **elaborating, elucidating, and extolling the Nature of God**, are some of the most important materials in the Wisdom Literature – particularly in the Psalms; for example:

Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long.
Remember **your mercy**, O LORD, and your [covenant love] (*hesed*),
for they have been from of old.
Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your [covenant love] (*hesed*) remember me, for the sake of **your goodness**, O LORD!
Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.
All the paths of the LORD are [covenant love] (*hesed*) and **faithfulness**,
for those who keep his covenant (*b^erith*) and his testimonies (*‘eduth*). (Psalm 25:4-10 ESV)

The Psalmist, in this case David, is clear that understanding of the Nature of God is only available to a person who lives by the Way of God – **one who is faithful to God’s covenant and keeps his testimonies** (the Ten Commandments), **as specified in the Writings of Moses.**

Many Psalms make direct allusion to Exodus 33:19 and 34:6-7, for example:¹⁷⁴

But you, O Lord, are a God **merciful and gracious**,
slow to anger and abounding in [covenant love] (*hesed*) and **faithfulness**. (Psalm 86:15 ESV)
He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.
The LORD is **merciful and gracious**, **slow to anger** and **abounding in [covenant love] (*hesed*).**
(Psalm 103:7-8 ESV)
He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; the LORD is **gracious and merciful**.
(Psalm 111:4 ESV)

God’s “*hesed*” and “faithfulness” are frequently used together, almost as a hendiadys, describing the extent of **God’s commitment to those he calls**: “*hesed*” demonstrates God’s unfailing commitment to his side of the covenant; “faithfulness” implies that God do everything in his power to make the relationship work:

¹⁷⁴ See also Psalms 36:5, 40:10-11, 57:10, 89:1-2, 108:4, 116:5, 145:8

But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD.
At an acceptable time, O God,
in the **abundance of your [covenant love] (hesed)** answer me in **your saving faithfulness**.
(Psalm 69:13 ESV)

For your **[covenant love] (hesed)** is great above the heavens;
your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. (Psalm 108:4 ESV)

For great is his **[covenant love] (hesed)** toward us,
and **the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever**. (Psalm 117:2a ESV)

The “Nature of God”, in general, is one of the most important themes in the Psalms, for example:

Oh, **how abundant is your goodness**, which you have stored up for those who fear you ...
(Psalm 31:19a ESV)

For you, O Lord, are **good and forgiving**,
abounding in [covenant love] (hesed) to all who call upon you.
Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; **listen to my plea for grace**. (Psalm 86:5-6 ESV)

The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
They are planted **in the house of the LORD**; they flourish in the courts of our God.
They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green,
to declare that the LORD is upright;
he is my rock, and there is **no unrighteousness in him**. (Psalm 92:12-15 ESV)

For **the LORD is good**;
his **[covenant love] (hesed)** endures forever, and his **faithfulness** to all generations.
(Psalm 100:5 ESV)

One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.
They shall pour forth **the fame of your abundant goodness**
and shall sing aloud of **your righteousness**.
The LORD is **gracious** and **merciful**, **slow to anger** and abounding in **[covenant love] (hesed)**.
The LORD is good to all, and **his mercy is over all** that he has made.
All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and **all your saints shall bless you!**
(Psalm 145:4, 7-10 ESV)

The Nature of God is first discussed in the Writings of Moses, but the Wisdom Literature, in particular the Psalms, greatly explains and elaborates on the Nature of God.

10.5.2 Historical Allusions

The **Davidic Psalms**¹⁷⁵ contain several clear **allusions to events recorded in the Writings of Moses**, for example:¹⁷⁶

Then the earth reeled and rocked;
the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry.
Smoke went up from his nostrils, and **devouring fire** from his mouth;
glowing coals flamed forth from him.
He bowed the heavens and came down; **thick darkness** was under his feet.
He rode on a cherub and flew; he came swiftly on the wings of the wind.
He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him, **thick clouds** dark with water.
Out of the brightness before him hailstones and coals of fire broke through his clouds.
The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and **the Most High uttered his voice**,
hailstones and coals of fire. (Psalm 18:7-13 ESV)

The above passage is David’s poetic elaboration of the description of **the theophany at Mount Sinai**:

On the morning of the third day there were **thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain**
and **a very loud trumpet blast**, so that all the people in the camp trembled. Then Moses brought the
people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain.

Now **Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire**. The smoke of it
went up like the smoke of a kiln, and **the whole mountain trembled greatly**. And as the sound of the
trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and **God answered him in thunder**. The LORD came down
on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. (Exodus 19:16-20a ESV)

¹⁷⁵ For a discussion of the Davidic Psalms see the paper “David – a Man After My Own Heart” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

¹⁷⁶ See also Psalms 18:14-15, 68:7-8, 103:7, 133:2

The **later Psalmists**¹⁷⁷ make even more allusions to the Writings of Moses, for example:

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,

and by the breath of his mouth all their host.

He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses.

For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. (Psalm 33:6-7, 9 ESV)

The above passage is a clear allusion to **the creation event** recorded in Genesis:¹⁷⁸

In the beginning, God **created the heavens and the earth.**

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." **And it was so.** (Genesis 1:1, 9 ESV)

There are several allusions to **the Exodus and subsequent events**, for example:¹⁷⁹

You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph.¹⁸⁰

When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid;
indeed, the deep trembled.

The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side.

The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind;

your lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook.

Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen.

You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. (Psalm 77:15-20 ESV)

Several Psalms comprise a summary and an interpretation of the events recorded in the Writings of Moses, for example, Psalm 105 starts out in the first six verses with an exhortation to **True Worshipers of God** to proclaim his works, to **proclaim the gospel:**

Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; **make known his deeds among the peoples!**

Sing to him, sing praises to him; **tell of all his wondrous works!**

Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of **those who seek the LORD rejoice!**

Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!

Remember the wondrous works that he has done,

his miracles, and the [mish*patim] he uttered,

O offspring of Abraham, his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones! (Psalm 105:1-6 ESV)

The Psalmist then goes on to recite some of the works of YHWH. Verses seven through eleven allude to the **Patriarchal Promises**. Verses twelve through twenty-two rehearse **patriarchal history**. Verses twenty-three through thirty-eight review the **sojourn in Egypt and the Exodus**. Finally, verses thirty-nine to forty-four discuss the **wilderness and the conquest** ending with a brief summary of God's purpose:

... that they might keep his statutes and observe his [torah].

Praise the LORD! (Psalm 105:45 ESV)

Psalms 78, 106, and 107 all follow a similar plan. **Clearly the various Psalmists had the Writings of Moses on their minds.** They drew from the imagery and elaborated the messages from the Writings of Moses.

10.5.3 The Promises of God

The whole working out of the Plan of God is based on the two promises made to Abraham:

Now **the LORD said to Abram,** "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And **I will make of you a great nation,** and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**"

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him ... Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "**To your offspring I will give this land.**" (Genesis 12:1-4a, 7a ESV)

The two promises: ¹⁸¹

- first, "I will make of you a great nation" ... "To your offspring I will give this land",
- secondly, "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed".

¹⁷⁷ See *Excursus 7 - Analysis of Non-Davidic Psalms* for a discussion of the Non-Davidic Psalms.

¹⁷⁸ See also Psalm 74:13-17

¹⁷⁹ See also Psalms 81:5b-7,10, 95:8-11, 99:6-7, 114:1-8, 135:8-12, 136:10-22

¹⁸⁰ This is an allusion to the fact that Joseph and his family were already in Egypt when Jacob came to Egypt with the rest of his family.

¹⁸¹ For a detailed discussion of these promises see section **3. The Covenant of Promise** in the paper "**Covenants of Grace**" located at

www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

The ancient Nation of Israel focused primarily on the second part of the first promise **“To your offspring I will give this land”** – the first part of the promise was taken as implicit in the creation of the Nation of Israel. After the conquest, the Book of Joshua asserts:¹⁸²

Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. And the LORD gave them rest on every side just **as he had sworn to their fathers.** Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. **Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.** (Joshua 21:43-45 ESV)

Some later Psalmists picked up on this and repeated it:¹⁸³

He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant that he made with **Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac,** which he confirmed to **Jacob** as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, **“To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance.”** (Psalm 105:8-11 ESV)

The first part of the first promise, **“I will make of you a great nation”**, was implicit in the conquest of the land – Israel was to be the “great nation”.¹⁸⁴ **The blessing of YHWH on Israel** implies Israel’s “greatness” – this is recognized in many Psalms:

The LORD is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed.
Oh, save your people and bless your heritage! Be their shepherd and **carry them forever.**
Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!
Remember me, O LORD, when you **show favor to your people;** help me when you save them,
that I may look upon **the prosperity of your chosen ones,**
that I may rejoice in **the gladness of your nation,** that I may glory with your inheritance.
He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and [mish^apatim] to Israel.
He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his [mish^apatim]. Praise the LORD!
(Psalms 28:8-9, 33:12, 106:4-5, 147:19-20)

However, the Psalmist of the 119th Psalm focused on **another promise of God – the covenant benefit promised to Israel at Sinai:**

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, **you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples,** for all the earth is mine; and **you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**’ (Exodus 19:5-6a ESV)

Israel was promised by YHWH to be “my treasured possession,” which required fulfillment of the covenant stipulation to be **“a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”**. In the Covenant of Performance,¹⁸⁵ **YHWH unequivocally committed to accomplish his purpose for Israel.** The Psalmist recognized that this promise had NOT been fulfilled:¹⁸⁶

My **eyes long** for your salvation and **for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.**
My eyes long for your promise; I ask, **“When will you comfort me?”**
Let your [covenant love] (hesed) **comfort me according to your promise to your servant.**
(Psalm 119:123, 82, 76 ESV)

The Psalmist understood that **fulfillment of this promise implies “salvation” and “life”** – eternal life:

Let your [covenant love] (hesed) come to me, O LORD, **your salvation according to your promise;**
This is my comfort in my affliction, that **your promise gives me life.**
I entreat your favor with all my heart; **be gracious to me according to your promise.**
Uphold me **according to your promise,** that **I may live,** and let me not be put to shame in **my hope!**
Plead my cause and redeem me; give me life according to your promise!
(Psalm 119:41, 50, 58, 116, 154 ESV)

¹⁸² See also Deuteronomy 1:11, 6:3,19, 9:3, 11:25, 12:20, 15:6, 18:2, 19:8, 26:18,19, 27:3, 29:13

¹⁸³ See also Psalms 22:4-5, 106:24, 135:8-12, 136:17-22

¹⁸⁴ The New Testament authors make it clear that the anti-typical fulfillment of this is the Church, which will ultimately grow to include all people over the whole world; see John 8:31-59, Acts 3:19-26, Romans 4:13,16-18, 8:15-17,23, Galatians 3:6-9,29, 4:4-7, Ephesians 1:3-14, Hebrews 12:22-24,28, 1 Peter 2:9-10.

¹⁸⁵ This covenant was briefly discussed in section [6.3 The Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant](#); see the reference there for further discussion.

¹⁸⁶ See also Psalms 74:1, 77:7-9, 79:5, 80:4

Furthermore, the Psalmist understood that on his part **living by the Way of God was required:**

The LORD is my portion; I promise to **keep your words.**

Confirm to your servant your promise, **that you may be feared.**

Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and **let no iniquity get dominion over me.**

My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, **that I may meditate on your promise.**

Your promise is well tried, and **your servant loves it.** (Psalm 119:57, 38, 133, 148, 140 ESV)

From the New Testament, it is clear that **the promises made to Israel have passed to the Church:**¹⁸⁷

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like **living stones are being built up as a spiritual house**, to be **a holy priesthood**, to **offer spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

But you are **a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession**, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but **now you are God's people**; once you had not received mercy, but **now you have received mercy.**¹⁸⁸ (1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10 ESV)

The **second promise to Abraham is Messianic** – many Psalms look to the Messiah. In Psalm 65, David looks to the first coming of the Messiah to atone for sins, **the beginning of the blessing**, and then looks to the end result in **the second coming when all the earth is blessed:**¹⁸⁹

O you who hear prayer, **to you shall all flesh come.**

When iniquities prevail against me, **you atone for our transgressions.**

Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts!

By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness,

O God of our salvation, **the hope of all the ends of the earth** and of the farthest seas;

... so that **those who dwell at the ends of the earth** are in awe at your signs.

You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy.

You visit the earth and water it; you greatly enrich it; **the river of God is full of water;**

you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it.

You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.

You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.

The pastures of the wilderness overflow, **the hills gird themselves with joy,**

the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain,

they shout and sing together for joy. (Psalm 65:2-4a, 5, 8-13 ESV)

A later Psalmist makes the same point – the Messiah made salvation possible in the First Advent; in the Second Advent that salvation will spread to all the earth:

Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for **he has done marvelous things!**

His right hand and his holy arm **have worked salvation** for him.

The LORD has made known his salvation;

he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.

He has remembered his [covenant love] (hesed) and faithfulness to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, **all the earth**; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

Let the rivers clap their hands; **let the hills sing for joy** together before the LORD,

for he comes to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity. (Psalm 98:1-4, 8-9 ESV)

God made an unequivocal promise to Moses, in the Covenant of Performance, **that he would accomplish his plan.** Later writers elucidated the promises, but only from our perspective at the end-time, after some thirty-five hundred years of the working-out of the Plan of God, and with the New Testament documents, can we **understand how God will fulfill the promises:**

And he said, "Behold, **I am [cutting] a covenant.** Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD, for **it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.** ..." (Exodus 34:10 ESV)

¹⁸⁷ See also the scriptures in footnote 184.

¹⁸⁸ See Hosea 1:6,8-9, 2:23

¹⁸⁹ See also Davidic Psalms 22:27-31, 86:9-10, 138:4-5, 145:1-3; and non-Davidic Psalms 43:3-4, 47:1-3,7-9, 49:7-9, 76:8-9, 93:1-2, 96:10,13, 97:1,6,9, 99:1-5, 102:12,15,18-22

10.5.4 Conversion

The definition of “conversion” as given by the **Prophet Jeremiah** is:¹⁹⁰

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when **I will make a new covenant ... I will put my [torah] within them, and I will write it on their hearts.** And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **I will give them one heart and one way,** that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And **I will put the fear of me in their hearts,** that they may not turn from me. (Jeremiah 31:31a, 33b, 32:39-40)

Conversion is a matter of the “heart” – a person’s innermost being, what a person truly is and what the person aspires to be. **God says that it is necessary to have his teaching, his torah, inscribed on a “converted” heart.** This can occur only by God’s calling, his gift of the Holy Spirit, and a life-long commitment to live by the Way of God.

Although **Moses** lamented the fact that the Israelites did NOT have this conversion, he nevertheless enjoined on them the necessity of **serving YHWH from the “heart”**:

Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!

You shall **love the LORD your God with all your heart** and with all your [mind] and with all your might. And **these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.** (Deuteronomy 5:29, 6:5-6 ESV)

The importance of the “heart” in serving God was well known to the authors of the Wisdom

Literature. The word לֵב - lev, and לֵבָב - levav, both mean “heart”;¹⁹¹ they occur hundreds of times in the Wisdom Literature. Here are a few examples related to **writing God’s teaching on the heart**:

Agree with God, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you.

Receive **instruction** from his mouth, and **lay up his words in your heart.** (Job 22:21-22 ESV)

The mouth of the righteous utters **wisdom**, and his tongue speaks [**mish*pat**].

The [torah] of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip. (Psalm 37:30-31 ESV)

I delight to do your will, O my God; **your [torah] is within my heart.** (Psalm 40:8 ESV)

My mouth shall speak **wisdom**; the **meditation of my heart** shall be **understanding.** (Psalm 49:3 ESV)

So teach us to number our days that we may get **a heart of wisdom.** (Psalm 90:12 ESV)

Blessed are those who **keep his testimonies**, who **seek him with their whole heart** ...

With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!

Give me understanding, that I may **keep your [torah]** and observe it **with my whole heart.**

May **my heart be blameless in your statutes**, that I may not be put to shame!

Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they **are the joy of my heart.**

I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

With my whole heart I cry; answer me, O LORD! **I will keep your statutes.**

(Psalm 119:2, 10, 34, 80, 111, 112, 145 ESV)

... making your ear attentive to **wisdom** and **inclining your heart to understanding;**

... for **wisdom will come into your heart**, and **knowledge** will be pleasant to your [mind]; (Proverbs 2:2, 10 ESV)

Let not [covenant love] (**hesed**) and **faithfulness** forsake you;

bind them around your neck; **write them on the tablet of your heart.** (Proverbs 3:3 ESV)

My son, be attentive to **my words**; incline your ear to **my sayings.**

Let them not escape from your sight; **keep them within your heart.** (Proverbs 4:20-21 ESV)

... keep my **commandments** and live; keep my **teaching** (torah) as the apple of your eye;

bind them on your fingers; **write them on the tablet of your heart.** (Proverbs 7:2-3 ESV)

Incline your ear, and **hear the words of the wise**, and **apply your heart to my knowledge** ... (Proverbs 22:17 ESV)

Whoever **keeps a command** will know no evil thing,

and **the wise heart** will know the proper time and the just way. (Ecclesiastes 8:5 ESV)

The writing of the teaching of God on the heart can only occur through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Few people in Old Testament times were given the indwelling of the Holy Spirit because the First Advent had NOT occurred. For the Holy Spirit to be generally available, it was necessary for the sacrifice

¹⁹⁰ See also Ezekiel 11:14-20, 36:22-29a

¹⁹¹ See Holladay pages 171-172

of Jesus Christ to occur. **On the night of the first New Testament Passover, Jesus commenced the application of the New Covenant:**

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, **“This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”** And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, **“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. ...”** (Luke 22:19-20 ESV)

Since then, the New Covenant has been available only to the few individuals called to the True Church. **After the Second Advent, the New Covenant will be rolled out to each and every person on the planet.**

10.6 References in the Prophets

The writing prophets make several direct allusions to Moses and his writings. **Their greatest focus is the apostacy of Israel in rejecting God’s teaching and his covenant mediated by Moses.** They discuss various aspects of the responsibility of Priests/Levites in teaching the Way of God. **Most importantly they provide a glimpse into the World Tomorrow when all the world will live by the Way of God as defined in the Writings of Moses.**

10.6.1 Historical Allusions

As a prelude to his final prayer for mercy and salvation,¹⁹² **the Prophet Isaiah** briefly recounts some past salvific acts of YHWH performed through Moses:

I will recount the [covenant love] (hesed) of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his [covenant love] (hesed).

For he said, **“Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely.”**
And **he became their Savior.**

In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them;
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit;¹⁹³
therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.¹⁹⁴

Then **he remembered the days of old, of Moses** and his people.

Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock?

Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit,¹⁹⁵

who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses,
who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name,
who led them through the depths?

Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble.

Like livestock that go down into the valley, **the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest.**

So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name.

(Isaiah 63:7-14 ESV)

Isaiah then goes on to pray to YHWH appealing to his past salvific acts and imploring YHWH to accomplish all the prophecies that have been revealed through Isaiah. **The Prophet Micah** reports a saying of YHWH similarly appealing to the events at the time of Moses:

Hear what the LORD says:

Arise, **plead your case** before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.

Hear, you mountains, **the indictment of the LORD,** and you enduring foundations of the earth, for **the LORD has an indictment against his people,** and he will contend with Israel.

“O my people, what have I done to you?

How have I wearied you? Answer me!

For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and **I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.**

O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what [Bileam] the son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,

that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD.” (Micah 6:1-5 ESV)

¹⁹² See Isaiah 63:15-19, 64:1-9

¹⁹³ See Numbers 13:26-28,31, 14:1-4

¹⁹⁴ See Numbers 14:39-45

¹⁹⁵ See Numbers 11:25

Micah reports YHWH's legal case against Israel. He demands to know what wrong he has done to Israel. He cites his salvation from Egypt under Moses and his deliverance from the curses of Bil'e'am. YHWH's purpose was to demonstrate his "righteous acts" as the basis for his suzerainty over Israel. **Micah then goes on to discuss YHWH's requirements** of Israel, but more importantly of any True Worshipper:

With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my [life]?
He has told you, O man, what is good; and **what does the LORD require of you but to do [mish'pat], and to love [hesed], and to walk humbly with your God?** (Micah 6:6-8 ESV)

Just before the final destruction of the nation, **Jeremiah** similarly reports a saying of YHWH which again appeals to Moses to demonstrate the depths to which the nation has sunk:

Then the LORD said to me, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go! And when they ask you, '**Where shall we go?**' you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD:
Those who are for pestilence, to pestilence,
and those who are for the sword, to the sword;
those who are for famine, to famine,
and those who are for captivity, to captivity.' ..." (Jeremiah 15:1-2 ESV)

The people were so steeped in sin that only destruction was possible.¹⁹⁶ Moses had twice interceded for Israel when God expressed a desire to wipe out the nation.¹⁹⁷ Samuel had also interceded at a critical period in Israel's history.¹⁹⁸ By the time of Jeremiah, there was no further appeal that anyone could make on behalf of the nation.

When he recognized that the end of the Exile was in sight, **Daniel** prayed for forgiveness of the sins of the people and for restoration to the Land of Israel:

Then **I turned my face to the Lord God**, seeking him **by prayer and pleas for mercy ...**
To the Lord our God belong **mercy** and **forgiveness**, for we have rebelled against him and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by **walking in his [torah]**, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. **All Israel has transgressed your [torah]** and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And **the curse and oath that are written in the [torah] of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us**, because we have sinned against him.
He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. **As it is written in the [toarh]of Moses**, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth. (Daniel 9:3a, 9-13 ESV)

Daniel's plea was successful because the return from exile soon began.¹⁹⁹ The final allusion to Moses in the writings of the Prophets is in the last prophetic book, the **Book of Malachi**.²⁰⁰

Remember the [torah] of my servant Moses, the statutes and [mish'patim] that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the [earth] with a decree of utter destruction." (Malachi 4:4-6 ESV)

The Prophets of Israel were well aware of the history of the nation beginning with God's salvific acts recorded in the Writings of Moses. Their prophecies were rooted in the Writings of Moses.

10.6.2 Apostacy of Israel

Two of the earliest writing prophets, **Amos** and **Hosea**, paint a very graphic picture of the apostacy of Israel. Both prophets are specific that the apostacy is a violation of the Way of God – the teaching (*torah*) and the covenant (*b'erith*) as recorded in the Writings of Moses:

¹⁹⁶ See also Jeremiah 32:21-24

¹⁹⁷ See Exodus 32:9-14,30-33, Numbers 14:11-20

¹⁹⁸ See 1 Samuel 7:5-11

¹⁹⁹ See the discussion of this in section **10.3 The Restoration of Nehemiah and Ezra**.

²⁰⁰ This passage is discussed in detail in the paper "The Work of Elijah" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

Thus says the LORD:

“For three **transgressions**²⁰¹ of Judah, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because **they have rejected the [torah] of the LORD**,²⁰² and have **not kept his statutes**, but their **lies**²⁰³ **have led them astray**, those after which their fathers walked. (Amos 2:4 ESV)

Set the trumpet to your lips!

One like a vulture is over the house of the LORD,

because **they have transgressed my covenant (b^crith)**²⁰⁴ and **rebelled against my [torah]**.

For **they sow the wind**,²⁰⁵ and they shall reap the whirlwind.

Because Ephraim has **multiplied altars for sinning**, they have become to him altars for sinning.

Were I to write for him my [torah] by the ten thousands, **they would be regarded as a strange thing**.

(Hosea 8:1, 7a, 11-12 ESV)

Both prophets focus on the attitude which causes apostasy:

“They do not know how to do right”²⁰⁶ declares the LORD ... (Amos 3:10a ESV)

The **pride of Israel** testifies to his face ... (Hosea 7:10a ESV)

I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from me;

for now, O Ephraim, you have played the whore; Israel is defiled.

Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God.²⁰⁷

For **the spirit of whoredom**²⁰⁸ **is within them**, and they know not the LORD. (Hosea 5:3-4 ESV)

The **iniquity of Ephraim is bound up**; his **sin is kept in store**.²⁰⁹ (Hosea 13:12 ESV)

The **Prophet Hosea** gets to the heart of the problem – **refusal to repent**:

My people are bent on turning away from me,

and **though they call out** to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all.

To me they cry, **“My God, we—Israel—know you.”**

Their heart is false,²¹⁰ now they must bear their guilt

What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah?

Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew **that goes early away**.

I would redeem them, but **they speak lies** against me.

They do not cry to me from the heart,

They return, but not upward; **they are like a treacherous bow**;

(Hosea 11:7, 8:2, 10:2a, 6:4, 7:13b-14aα, 16a ESV)

The **Prophets Isaiah, Micah, and Habakkuk** condemn the thought leaders who embrace evil and lead the people into apostasy:

Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom!

Give ear to the teaching (torah) of our God, you people of Gomorrah! (Isaiah 1:10 ESV)

Hear, you **heads** of Jacob and **rulers** of the house of Israel!

Is it not for you to know justice?—you who hate the good and love the evil

Hear this, you **heads** of the house of Jacob and **rulers** of the house of Israel,

who **detest justice** and **make crooked all that is straight**.²¹¹ ...

Its **heads** give judgment for a bribe; its **priests** teach for a price;

its **prophets** practice divination for money ... (Micah 3:1-2a, 9, 11a ESV)

So **the [torah] is paralyzed**, and **justice never goes forth**.

For **the wicked surround the righteous**;

so justice goes forth perverted. (Habakkuk 1:4 ESV)

The **Prophet Isaiah** documents the universal end result of apostasy:

The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants;

for they have **transgressed [torah]**, **violated the statutes**, **broken the everlasting covenant (b^crith)**.

Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt;

therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and **few men are left**.

²⁰¹ See also Amos 5:12

²⁰² See also Isaiah 5:24, 42:24, Jeremiah 6:19, 9:13, 16:11

²⁰³ See also Hosea 11:12a

²⁰⁴ See also Hosea 6:7

²⁰⁵ See also Amos 6:12b, Hosea 10:12-13

²⁰⁶ See also Hosea 9:9aα

²⁰⁷ See also Isaiah 30:9-11, Jeremiah 2:25b, 26:4-5, 44:10,23

²⁰⁸ See also Hosea 4:12, 9:1

²⁰⁹ The metaphor is hoarding sin as a treasure; see also Hosea 12:8

²¹⁰ See also Zechariah 7:12

²¹¹ See also Isaiah 5:20, Amos 5:7,10

Desolation is left in the city; the gates are battered into ruins.
For thus it shall be in the midst of the earth among the nations,
as when an olive tree is beaten, as at the gleaning when the grape harvest is done. (Isaiah 24:5-6, 12-13)

Because Israel failed to become “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” to teach the Way of God to the whole world, the world has gone the way of Satan. This will result in the Great Tribulation which will bring about the fulfilment of Jesus’ words:

For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.
(Mark 13:19-20 ESV)

God revealed to the ancient prophets the ultimate fate of humanity for refusing to follow the teaching of God as he revealed it in the Writings of Moses. **If Israel had obeyed God, as they agreed to do in the Sinai Covenant, God would have used the nation to teach all humanity the Way of God.**

10.6.3 Teaching the Way of God

Moses was the “teacher”, par excellence, of the Way of God. Moses was of the Tribe of Levi. Moses’ brother, Aaron, and his descendants were chosen by YHWH to be “priests”. The rest of the Tribe of Levi was consecrated to the service of the Tabernacle:

Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests ... (Exodus 28:1a ESV)

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him. They shall keep guard over him and over the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they minister at the tabernacle. ...” (Numbers 3:5-6 ESV)

Moses specifically tasked the Priests and Levites with teaching the people:

Then **Moses wrote (kathav) this [torah] and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi**, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. And **Moses commanded them**,

At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this [torah] before all Israel in their hearing.

Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this [torah], and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.
(Deuteronomy 31:9-13 ESV)

And of Levi he said,

For they observed your word and kept your covenant (b^erith).
They shall teach Jacob your [mish^apatim] and Israel your [torah] ...
(Deuteronomy 33:8a, 9b-10a ESV)

The **Book of Malachi** acknowledges the Covenant with Levi and the role Priests and Levites in teaching,²¹² but derides the teachers of the day for failure to properly fulfill their duties:

And now, O priests, this command is for you. If you will not listen, if you will not take it to heart to give honor to my name, says the LORD of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will rebuke your offspring, and spread dung on your faces, the dung of your offerings, and you shall be taken away with it. So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant (b^erith) with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts.

My covenant (b^erith) with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant²¹³ of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. True instruction (torah) was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction (torah) from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

But you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble by your instruction (torah). You have corrupted the covenant (b^erith) of Levi, says the LORD of hosts, and so I make you despised and abased before all the people, inasmuch as you do not keep my ways but show partiality in your instruction (torah). (Malachi 2:1-9 ESV)

²¹² See also Haggai 2:11-14, Lamentations 2:9

²¹³ The word “covenant” is supplied by the translator – it is NOT in Hebrew.

The role of teaching had also been assumed by the prophets. The **Prophet Isaiah** records the role of himself and his disciples in teaching the people:

Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching (torah) among my disciples. I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and **I will hope in him**. Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. And when they say to you, “Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,” **should not a people inquire of their God?** Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? **To the teaching (torah) and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.** (Isaiah 8:16-20 ESV)

The **Prophets Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel** include the official prophets with the priests for condemnation due to their **failure to properly teach the people**:

Yet let no one contend, and let none accuse, for **with you is my contention, O priest**.

You shall stumble by day; **the prophet also shall stumble with you by night**;

and I will destroy your mother.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;

because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me.

And since **you have forgotten the [torah] of your God**, I also will forget your children.

The more they increased, the more they sinned against me; I will change their glory into shame.

They feed on the sin of my people; **they are greedy for their iniquity**.

And it shall be **like people, like priest; I will punish them for their ways** and repay them for their deeds. (Hosea 4:4-9 ESV)

The **priests** did not say, ‘Where is the LORD?’

Those who handle the [torah] did not know me; the **shepherds** transgressed against me; the **prophets prophesied by Baal** and went after things that do not profit.

How can you say, ‘We are wise, and the [torah] of the LORD is with us’?

But behold, **the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie**.

The **wise men** shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken;

behold, they **have rejected the word of the LORD**, so **what wisdom is in them?**

(Jeremiah 2:8, 8:8-9 ESV)

They seek a vision from the prophet, while **the [torah] perishes from the priest** and counsel from the elders.

The **conspiracy of her prophets in her midst** is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst. Her **priests have done violence to my [torah]**²¹⁴ and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, **neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean**,²¹⁵ and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that **I am profaned among them**. (Ezekiel 7:26b, 22:25-26)

The Way of God is defined by the Writings of Moses. Moses himself tasked the Priests and Levites with teaching the Way of God. The true prophets of God taught the Way of God, but the mainstream, institutional prophets, did NOT. In the World Tomorrow, **God will provide trustworthy teachers to teach all humanity the Way of God.**

10.6.4 The World Tomorrow

The earliest harbingers of the Second Exodus, the New Israel, and the New Covenant are found in the Writings of Moses. The **potential for repentance and restoration** is emphasized in Leviticus chapter twenty-six, and **YHWH is explicit that he will remain committed to his side of the covenant**, the definition of *hesed*:

But **if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers** in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—**if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled** and they make amends for their iniquity, then **I will remember my covenant** with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. But the land shall be abandoned by them and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my [mish*patim] and their [being] abhorred my statutes.

Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, **I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them**, for I am the LORD their God. But

²¹⁴ See also Zephaniah 3:3-4

²¹⁵ See Leviticus 10:10-11, Ezekiel 44:23

I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, **that I might be their God**: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 26:40-45 ESV)

The **Covenant of Life**²¹⁶ was cut between YHWH and the Israelites just before entering the Promised Land, but **the scope of the covenant specifically includes all True Worshipers over all times**:

... so that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the LORD your God, which the LORD your God is making with you today, that **he may establish you today as his people**, and that he may be your God, as he promised you, and as he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. **It is not with you alone that I am making this sworn covenant**, but with whoever is standing here with us today before the LORD our God, **and with whoever is not here with us today**. (Deuteronomy 29:12-15 ESV)

After the blessings and the curses of the covenant are outlined, the covenant reiterates repentance and looks to the Second Exodus, the New Israel, and the New Covenant. The **“circumcision of the heart”** is a metaphor implying conversion – **“turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your mind”**. To **“obey the voice of the LORD and keep all his commandments”** requires the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The promise of the New Covenant is eternal life – implicit in the Covenant of Life, **“that you may live”**. In the New Israel in which each and every person is called to conversion, God will indeed **“take delight in prospering”** the nation:

And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and **you call them to mind** among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, and **return to the LORD your God**, you and your children, and **obey his voice in all that I command you** today, **with all your heart and with all your [mind]**, then **the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you**, and he will **gather you again from all the peoples** where the LORD your God has scattered you.

If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. And the LORD your God will **bring you into the land** that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will **make you more prosperous and numerous** than your fathers.

And **the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring**, so that **you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your [mind]**, **that you may live**. And the LORD your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecuted you. And **you shall again obey the voice of the LORD and keep all his commandments** that I command you today.

The LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground. For **the LORD will again take delight in prospering you**, as he took delight in your fathers, when you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this Book of the [torah], when you **turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your [mind]**. (Deuteronomy 30:1-10 ESV)

These themes are taken up by the latter prophets and greatly elaborated upon. The **Prophet Micah** captures the quintessence of success of the World Tomorrow – **the proliferation of the torah**:

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the **mountain of the house of the LORD** shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and **peoples shall flow to it**, and **many nations** shall come, and say:

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that **he may teach us his ways** and that **we may walk in his paths**.”

For **out of Zion shall go forth the [torah]**, and **the word of the LORD** from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, **neither shall they learn war anymore**; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of **the LORD of hosts has spoken**. (Micah 4:1-4 ESV see also Isaiah 2:2-4)

In the **First Servant Song**, the **Prophet Isaiah** looks to the work of the Messiah – both the First Advent and the Second Advent:

Behold **my servant**, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my [being] delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; **he will bring forth justice (mish'pat) to the nations**.

He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;

a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice (mish'pat).

He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice (mish'pat) in the earth; and **the coastlands wait for his [torah]**. (Isaiah 42:1-4 ESV see also Matthew 12:17-21)

²¹⁶ For a detailed discussion of this covenant, see section 5. **The Covenant of Life** in the paper “**Covenants of Grace**”, located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

The overall objective of the Messiah is summarized:

The LORD was pleased, for his righteousness' sake, to magnify his [torah] and make it glorious.
(Isaiah 42:21 ESV)

Isaiah records encouragement from YHWH to True Worshipers to look beyond the daily troubles of life to the time of salvation:

Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD:

Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation;
for [torah] will go out from me, and I will set my justice (mishpat) for a light to the peoples.
My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples;
the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait.
Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment,
and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;
but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.

Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart²¹⁷ is my [torah]:

fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings. (Isaiah 51:4-7 ESV)

The Way of God will be taught to each and every person on the planet starting with the New Israel in Jerusalem:

For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. (Isaiah 30:19-21 ESV)

YHWH, Jesus Christ, taught Moses the Way of God. Jesus Christ is the ultimate Teacher. When he returns as King of kings, he will assume his role as the Good Shepherd leading all humanity into the Way of God:

So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ..." (John 10:7-16 ESV)

The Good Shepard is now preparing True Christians to be ready to join him in the task of teaching all humanity. In the World Tomorrow, Jesus Christ will lead the resurrected saints to teach the Way of God to all the "other sheep that are not of this fold".

11. The Writings of Moses in the New Testament

The following subsections touch on some of the most important sections of the New Testament that relate to the Writings of Moses. Jesus clearly endorsed the Writings of Moses as looking forward to his life and work. The working-out of the Plan of God is clearly shown by the New Testament authors to be dependant on the promises to Abraham contained in the Writings of Moses. The promise of eternal life, the foundation of Christian faith, is clearly rooted in the Writings of Moses. The Apostle Paul explicitly explains how the Writings of Moses relate to the Way of God, Christian living, and salvation.

In all quotations from the Bible, where the English word "law" is translated from the Greek word "*nomos*", the English word is substituted by "[nomos]". This is to focus the reader's attention on the complexity of the word "*nomos*", as discussed in Excursus 8 – torah and nomos. In many of these cases, the New Testament authors are using "*nomos*" as a reference to "*torah*". In these cases, the translation should be like "teaching", "instruction", or "direction". To translate "*nomos*" as "law" with respect to

²¹⁷ See also Jeremiah 31:33, 32:39-40, Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26-27

the Writings of Moses, although technical a correct translation, is completely misleading. The Writings of Moses are “*torah*” the teaching of God to explain the Way of God, the Words of Eternal Life.²¹⁸

11.1 Jesus and the Writings of Moses

The three scriptures quoted on page one of this document,²¹⁹ define the most important relationship of Jesus Christ to the Writings of Moses. **Jesus explicitly taught that the Writings of Moses were the foundation of his life and work.** The **Apostles Peter and Paul** affirm that Moses specifically prophesized about the life and work of Jesus Christ:²²⁰

But what **God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets**, that his **Christ would suffer**, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and **that he may send the Christ** appointed for you, **Jesus, whom heaven must receive** until the time **for restoring all the things** about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. **Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me** from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. ...’ (Acts 3:18-22 ESV)

“... To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, **saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said** would come to pass: that **the Christ must suffer** and that, by **being the first to rise from the dead**, he **would proclaim light** both to our people and to the Gentiles.” (Acts 26:22-23 ESV)

The Apostle John summarizes the relationship of Jesus Christ to Moses:

For **from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.** For the **[teaching] (nomos) was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.** (John 1:16-17 ESV)

The Writings of Moses define the Way of God, the teaching of God, the words of eternal life; but, **without God’s grace, the teaching is of no value.** Only through the redemption by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ can God apply grace to a human being and provide the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. **Only through indwelling of the Holy Spirit can a person understand and live by the Way of God, THE TRUTH:**

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, **“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”** (John 8:31-32 ESV)

This is the world of Satan the Devil. The whole world is under the deception of Satan’s lies.²²¹ Satan’s agenda is to thwart the Plan of God by **the death of human beings:**

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to **those who are perishing.** In their case **the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers**, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4 ESV)

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called **the devil and Satan**, the **deceiver of the whole world** ... (Revelation 12:9a ESV)

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to **stand against the schemes of the devil.** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers**, against the **authorities**, against the **cosmic powers over this present darkness**, against the **spiritual forces of evil** in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:11-12 ESV)

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might **destroy the one who has the power of death**, that is, **the devil** ... (Hebrews 2:14 ESV)

Satan the Devil was well prepared for the First Advent. From the time of the Maccabees, he had been preparing a group of people to be his proxy as the adversary of Jesus of Nazareth. This group became known as the **“Pharisees”**. These people relentlessly attacked Jesus and in the end were the operative force in having him crucified.²²² It is **in the confrontations with the Pharisees that we see most clearly Jesus’ explanation and elaboration of the Writings of Moses.** However, **Satan’s first assault on Jesus** was a direct attack to which **Jesus responded by appealing to the Writings of Moses:**

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness **to be tempted by the devil.** And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And **the tempter** came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But **[Jesus] answered, “It is written,**

²¹⁸ Note that the word “*nomos*” is also used very loosely for any part of the Old Testament; for example, John 10:34 alluding to Psalm 82:6, John 15:25 alluding to Psalm 35:19 or 69:4.

²¹⁹ See Luke 24:25-27,44-45, Acts 28:23, Matthew 5:17-18

²²⁰ See also John 1:29-45

²²¹ See also John 8:40-44

²²² See John 11:57, Matthew 21:45-46, 22:15-16, John 18:2-3, Matthew 27:62-64

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

(Deuteronomy 8:3)

Then **the devil** took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and

‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’

(Psalm 91:11-12)

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written,

“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” **(Deuteronomy 6:16)**

Again, **the devil** took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you,²²³ if you will fall down and worship me.” Then **Jesus**

said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

“You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.” **(Deuteronomy 6:13).**

(Matthew 4:1-10 ESV see also Luke 4:1-12)

These quotations of Jesus demonstrate the power of the inspired word of God. Satan the Devil, the ruler of this world, stood powerless before the quoted words of God as recorded in the Writings of Moses. Jesus, as YHWH, was the operative entity in the relationship with Moses that resulted in the wonderful outpouring of revelation that we have. Jesus well knew the efficacy of these words inspired and enforced by the power of the Holy Spirit. **After this, Satan reverted to his proxy, the Pharisees.**

The Pharisees were extremely religious. They believed that only they had a correct understanding of the Bible in general and the Writings of Moses in particular. Their method comprised taking the literal words of the Bible and deriving innumerable implications from the words based on their interpretations of the words. **These interpretations became known as the “tradition of the elders”.**²²⁴

Now when the **Pharisees** gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that **some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled**, that is, unwashed. (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, **holding to the tradition of the elders**, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And **there are many other traditions that they observe**, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) And the **Pharisees** and the scribes asked him, **“Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders**, but eat with defiled hands?”

And he said to them, **“You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!** For **Moses said**, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ **But you say**, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, “Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban”’ (that is, given to God)—then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus **making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down**. And **many such things you do.**” (Mark 7:1-5, 9-13 ESV see also Matthew 15:1-6)

It was their “traditions” that the Pharisees taught as “law” and with which they required the people to comply. **They considered their traditions to actually supersede the plain words of the Bible.** They believed that strict compliance to their traditions rendered a person “righteous”, thus “earning” salvation. **Their arrogance** made them believe they were “better” than other people:

He also told this parable to **some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous**, and **treated others with contempt**: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, **one a Pharisee** and the other a tax collector. **The Pharisee**, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that **I am not like other men**, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, **‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’** I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For **everyone who exalts himself will be humbled**, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14 ESV)

Jesus plainly said that the Pharisees could NOT attain salvation through their teaching:

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** For **you shut the kingdom of heaven** in people’s faces. For **you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.** (Matthew 23:13 ESV)

Some of the **Pharisees** near him heard these things, and said to him, **“Are we also blind?”** Jesus said to them, **“If you were blind, you would have no guilt;** but now that you say, ‘We see,’ **your guilt remains.**” (John 9:40-41 ESV)

²²³ Note that as “ruler of this world”, these were Satan’s to give.

²²⁴ See also Galatians 1:14

Early in the Great Galilean Ministry, the synoptic authors record two interactions between Christ and the Pharisees which are **illustrative of the Pharisees hypocrisy compared to a true understanding of the Writings of Moses:**

At that time **Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath.** His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the **Pharisees** saw it, they **said to him,** “Look, **your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.**”

He said to them, “**Have you not read what David did when he was hungry,** and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, **which it was not lawful**²²⁵ for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the [nomos] how **on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath** and are guiltless?

I tell you, **something greater than the temple is here.** And **if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’** you would not have condemned the guiltless. For **the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.**” (Matthew 12:1-8 ESV see also Mark 2:23-28, Luke 6:1-5)

The Pharisees went to great lengths to define exactly and precisely what was allowed to be done on the Sabbath and what could NOT be done. According to their “traditions” picking and eating grain was NOT “lawful”. **Jesus points out the fallacies in their thinking on several levels:**

- The example of David who was given and ate the “Bread of the Presence” because it was all that was available, see 1 Samuel 21:1-6, Leviticus 24:5-9; Jesus’ point is that there can be exceptions to physical prescriptions and proscriptions
- Even the normal daily work of the Priests had to continue on the Sabbath, because it was required for Sabbath observance, i.e., the Priest’s normal work was performing sacrifices some of which were required on the Sabbath, see Numbers 28:9-10
- Jesus is greater than the Temple, he has the authority to determine what is sin and what is NOT sin
- God is far more interested that human beings learn “mercy” (see Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:8), **as one of the most important attributes of the Nature of God,** than to perfectly perform any physical activity such as giving sacrifices: the Pharisees focused only on physical things which they could enforce on others:

Woe to you, scribes and **Pharisees, hypocrites!** For **you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the [nomos]: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.** (Matthew 23:23 ESV)
- As “**Lord of the Sabbath**”, it is Jesus’ determination how to observe it

The next incident involved **healing on the Sabbath.** The Pharisees had determined that healing should NOT be done on the Sabbath. This was a major point of contention between the Pharisees and Jesus:²²⁶

He went on from there and entered their synagogue. And a man was there with a withered hand. And **[the Pharisees] asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—so that they might accuse him.** He said to them, “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So **it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**” Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. But **the Pharisees went out and conspired against him,** how to destroy him. (Matthew 12:9-14 ESV, see also Mark 3:1-6, Luke 6:6-11)

The Pharisees were very careful to take care of their own property.²²⁷ Their interest in other people was to control them, NOT help them. When Jesus stated the obvious, “**it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath**”, they conspired against him because **he challenged their authority.** This was what irked the Pharisees the most – they could NOT control Jesus:

And he said to them, “**You are those who justify yourselves before men,** but God knows your hearts. For **what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.** (Luke 16:15 ESV)

²²⁵ This is actually a “Pharisaic interpretation”: in Leviticus 24:5-9, the prescription is for the Priests to eat the “Bread of the Presence”, but there is NO proscription against anyone else eating it.

²²⁶ See similar incidents in Mark 2:1-12 // Matthew 9:1-8 // Luke 5:17-26 (“scribes” were likely Pharisees, see Luke 5:21), Luke 13:10-17, John 5:2-16

²²⁷ They “loved money”, see Luke 16:14

In the following incident, the Apostle John is NOT explicit that Jesus is talking to Pharisees, in verse eighteen of chapter five he just calls them “Jews”, but almost certainly the Pharisees were involved.²²⁸

(You – Pharisees) search the Scriptures because **you think that in them you have eternal life**; and **it is they that bear witness about me**, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people. But **I know that you do not have the love of God within you**. I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him.²²⁹
How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. **There is one who accuses you: Moses**, on whom you have set your hope. For **if you believed Moses, you would believe me**; for he wrote of me. **But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?** (John 5:39-47 ESV)

The Pharisees did NOT study the scriptures to learn the Way of God. **They studied to promote their own glory**. In the end, the words of eternal life recorded by Moses will stand in judgement over each and every human being. God the Father has granted judgement to Jesus Christ, yet he will judge no one – the written word is sufficient to serve judgement:

For **the Father judges no one**, but **has given all judgment to the Son** ... (John 5:22 ESV)

You judge according to the flesh; **I judge no one**. (John 8:15 ESV)

The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; **the word that I have spoken**²³⁰ **will judge him on the last day**. (John 12:48 ESV)

On another occasion, a “lawyer”, likely a Pharisee, questioned Jesus **about eternal life**.²³¹

And behold, **a lawyer stood up to put him to the test**, saying, “Teacher, **what shall I do to inherit eternal life?**” He said to him, **“What is written in the [nomos]? How do you read it?”** And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your [being] and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”²³² And he said to him, **“You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”** But he, **desiring to justify himself**, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:25-29 ESV)

The “lawyer’s” motivation, as with Pharisees in general, was NOT to learn the Way of God – they felt they had a perfect understanding already. **Jesus refers to the Writings of Moses** for instruction on eternal life. **The “lawyer” makes a correct response**, referring to scriptures which specify living by the Way of God. **Jesus affirms that Living by the Way of God, as defined by the Writings of Moses, is indeed a prerequisite for being a candidate for the gift of eternal life**; but again, the lawyer, pharisaically, affirms his true motivation – to justify himself.

In speaking to “the crowd”, many of whom had just been fed by the miracle of “the Feeding of 5000”,²³³ **Jesus is very clear on the relationship between his life and work and eternal life**.

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. ... For this is the will of my Father, that **everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life**, and I will raise him up on the last day. ... **I am the living bread** that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And **the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh**.” (John 6:35, 40, 51 ESV)

Again, **there were “Jews” in the crowd – likely Pharisees**. John records their reaction to Jesus’ words: **The Jews** then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, **you have no life in you**.”²³⁴ ...” (John 6:52-53 ESV)

Even some of Jesus’ disciples could not come to grips with the words of Jesus:

When **many of his disciples** heard it, they said, **“This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?”** But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit

²²⁸ John frequently uses the term “Jews” because his audience, primarily Gentiles in the area of Ephesus in the last years of the First Century, were not intimately familiar with the parties of Jews in Palestine from sixty years earlier – to them they were all just “Jews”. This usage is obvious in chapter nine – verse thirteen does use the word “Pharisees” then in verse eighteen, they are just called “Jews”.

²²⁹ This is a prophecy – during the Bar Cochaba revolt, many Pharisees supported Bar Cochaba acknowledging him to be the Messiah, see Barrett pages 133-136, Schürer I,2, pages 297-300, 309-312.

²³⁰ As recorded in the Writings of Moses

²³¹ See also Mark 10:17-31 // Matthew 19:16-30 // Luke 18:18-30

²³² See Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18b

²³³ See John 6:1-13 // Mark 6:30-44 // Matthew 14:13-21 // Luke 9:10-17

²³⁴ This is a foreshadowing of the New Testament Passover symbols, see Mark 14:22-25//Matthew 26:26-29//Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

[which] gives life; the flesh is no help at all. **The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.** But there are some of you who do not believe.”

After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” **Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”** (John 6:60-64a, 66-69 ESV)

Throughout chapter six of John (and elsewhere in the Gospel of John²³⁵), Jesus refers to himself as ἐγώ εἰμι - egō eimi, “I am”. This is the Septuagint translation of אֲנִי־אֵלֹהִים - ‘eh^eyeh, “I am”, in Exodus chapter three:

Then **Moses said to God,** “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘**What is his name? what shall I say to them?**’ God said to Moses, “**I AM (‘eh^eyeh) WHO I AM (‘eh^eyeh).**” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘**I AM (‘eh^eyeh)**’ has sent me to you.”

God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘[YHWH], the God of your fathers, **the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,** has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. (Exodus 3:13-15 ESV)

Jesus is clearly affirming his identity as YHWH – this was recognized by Peter: “**you are the Holy One of God**”. **As YHWH, Jesus had talked with Moses and given him the “words of eternal life” that are recorded in the Writings of Moses.** These are the words that Jesus reiterated during his ministry. These words are “**spirit and life**”. To “**eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood**” implies internalizing these words, making them part of one’s inner being, writing them on the heart. These are the words that will “**judge him on the last day**”.

11.2 Abraham and the Promises of God

The New Testament authors are explicit and certain about the efficacy and reliability of the promises of God contained in the Writings of Moses. The **Apostle Peter** summarizes:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, **through the knowledge** of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which **he has granted to us his precious and very great promises,** so that through them **you may become partakers of the divine nature,** having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (2 Peter 1:3-4 ESV)

The promises were first made to Abraham, but the New Testament authors are clear that **physical descent from Abraham is only a type of the true descent from Abraham, which is spiritual.** The specifics of the promises of God are identified as the Holy Spirit, faith, salvation, the resurrection, the Kingdom of God,²³⁶ and fulfillment of prophecy.²³⁷ **All the promises look to Jesus Christ and are fulfilled by his life and work.**

11.2.1 The Promises to Abraham²³⁸

The **Synoptist Luke** has provided us with a record of the words of **Mary the Mother of Jesus** and **Zechariah the father of John the Baptist** regarding the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham realized in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth:

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers, to **Abraham** and to **his offspring** forever.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ...
to show **the mercy promised to our fathers** and to **remember his holy covenant,**
the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we,
being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear ...
(Luke 1:54-55, 68, 72-74 ESV)

These people were among **the faithful remnant preserved by God as a community to which the Messiah could come** and be nurtured as a child. They clearly saw the First Advent as the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham.²³⁹ The **Apostle Paul** is clear that implicit in the promise to Abraham that he

²³⁵ See John 4:26, 8:12,18,24,28,58, 9:5, 10:7,9,11,14, 11:25, 13:19, 14:6, 15:1,5, 18:5,6,8

²³⁶ Some of the prophecies of the Kingdom of God were discussed in section **10.6.4 The World Tomorrow.**

²³⁷ See section **11.2.3 Fulfillment of the Promises in Jesus Christ**

²³⁸ The promises as given to Abraham were briefly discussed in section **10.5.3 The Promises of God.** For further discussion see section **3. The Covenant of Promise,** in the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

²³⁹ See also Luke 19:9, Acts 7:17,38,53

would be **“the father of many nations”** is his status as **“father of all who believe”**. To be a descendant of Abraham is a matter of “faith” – conversion, not physical descent:

The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe ... For the promise to **Abraham** and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the [nomos] but **through the righteousness of faith**. ... That is why it depends on faith, in order that **the promise may rest on grace** and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the [nomos] but also to the one who shares the faith of **Abraham**, who is **the father of us all**, as it is written, **“I have made you the father of many nations”** ... (Romans 4:11bα, 13, 16-17a ESV)

The **“many nations”** are **True Worshippers of God** – now just the Church, but in the World Tomorrow, all persons in all nations over the whole earth. Paul explicitly states that this is part of the promise of **“blessing to all nations”**:

Know then that it is **those of faith who are the sons of Abraham**.²⁴⁰ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, **“In you shall all the nations be blessed.”** So then, **those who are of faith** are blessed along with **Abraham, the man of faith**. (Galatians 3:7-9 ESV)

The author of Hebrews alludes to **the promise to Abraham** as a basis for **faith and encouragement**:

For when **God made a promise to Abraham**, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, **“Surely I will bless you and multiply you.”**²⁴¹ And thus **Abraham**, having patiently waited, **obtained the promise**. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when **God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose**, he guaranteed it with an oath,²⁴² so that by two unchangeable things, in which **it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge**²⁴³ **might have strong encouragement** to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as **a sure and steadfast anchor** of the [mind], a hope that enters into **the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone** as a forerunner on our behalf ... (Hebrews 6:13-20a ESV)

The Christians to whom the Book of Hebrews was addressed, are included in **“the heirs of the promise”**. The author alludes to the **“promise to Abraham – I will bless you”**, and states that it is fulfilled in Jesus’ having gone to **“the inner place behind the curtain”**, that is, his role as High Priest and Intercessor at the right hand of God the Father in the spiritual temple in eternity.

The whole working out of the Plan of God is based on the two promises made to Abraham.²⁴⁴ The New Testament authors are clear and specific that the promises are fulfilled in life and work of Jesus Christ. Abraham became the “father of the faithful”, and God’s intention is to extend to all humanity the opportunity to become “children of Abraham”.

11.2.2 Descent from Abraham

John the Baptist succinctly summarized **the value of physical descent from Abraham**:

But when he saw many of the **Pharisees** and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, **“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.”** (Matthew 3:7-9 ESV see also Luke 3:7-8)

The **Apostle John** reports an interaction of Jesus with some “Jews” who, **clinging to their physical descent**, refuse to accept the words of Jesus:

So **Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him**, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” They answered him, **“We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone.”** How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’” Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So **if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**

“I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.” I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.” They answered him, **“Abraham is our father.”** Jesus said to them, **“If you were Abraham’s children, you**

²⁴⁰ This is the source of the phrase “father of the faithful”.

²⁴¹ See Genesis 12:2, 22:17

²⁴² See Genesis 22:15-16

²⁴³ This likely an allusion to the Jerusalem Church having fled to Pella.

²⁴⁴ See the discussion of this in section **10.5.3 The Promises of God**.

would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. ...” (John 8:31-40 ESV)

True “freedom” comes only from Jesus, “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed”. Physical descent means nothing. True children of Abraham are those called by God to conversion, “if you were Abraham’s children” – spiritual descent leads to doing as Abraham did, living by the Way of God.

The Apostle Paul uses his own physical descent from Abraham as a segue into a discussion of “election”. God decides who he will call and when he will call each person. Physical descent is completely irrelevant:

For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.²⁴⁵ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the [nomos], the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”²⁴⁶ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.”²⁴⁷ And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.”²⁴⁸ As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”²⁴⁹

What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”²⁵⁰ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”²⁵¹ So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. (Romans 9:3-18 ESV)

Paul starts out by reciting some of the benefits of the Nation of Israel as God had worked with the nation – ending with the fulfillment of the prophecies in the incarnation.²⁵² Next, he uses two examples of election from the patriarchs: Isaac was elected by God over Ishmael and Jacob was elected over Esau. The point being that the right of physical descent has no part in God’s prerogative of election: both Ishmael and Esau were the firstborn sons and by descent were entitled to the preeminence. The calling of God is spiritual: “it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring”. The prerogative of election was specifically revealed to Moses: “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion”.²⁵³

The author of Hebrews summarizes the relationship of election and physical descent with reference to the incarnation:

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:14-18 ESV)

Jesus had to be fully human in order to be a “propitiation for sin”. The “offspring of Abraham” are those who accept Christ as a propitiation – now, those called to the True Church; but, ultimately, every human being who has ever lived without regard to physical descent.

²⁴⁵ See also Romans 11:1, 2 Corinthians 11:22

²⁴⁶ See Genesis 21:12

²⁴⁷ See Genesis 18:10

²⁴⁸ See Genesis 25:23

²⁴⁹ See Malachi 1:2-3

²⁵⁰ See Exodus 33:19

²⁵¹ See Exodus 9:16

²⁵² See the next section 11.2.3 Fulfillment of the Promises in Jesus Christ

²⁵³ See Exodus 33:19, 34:6-7

11.2.3 Fulfillment of the Promises in Jesus Christ

The second promise to Abraham, **“in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”**, was **particularized to a descendant of King David**:

But that same night **the word of the LORD came to Nathan**, “Go and tell my servant David, **‘Thus says the LORD: ... your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’**”

Then **King David went in and sat before the LORD and said**, “... And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true, and **you have promised this good thing to your servant**. Now therefore may it please you to **bless the house of your servant**, so **that it may continue forever before you**. For you, O Lord GOD, have spoken, and with your blessing shall **the house of your servant be blessed forever**.” (2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 16, 18a, 28-29 ESV)

(20-21) I have found **David**, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, so that **my hand shall be established with him**; my arm also shall strengthen him.

(24) My faithfulness and my [covenant love] (hesed) shall be with him, and **in my name shall his horn be exalted**.

(26-28) He shall cry to me, ‘You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.’

And **I will make him the firstborn**, the **highest of the kings of the earth**.

My [covenant love] (hesed) I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him.

(29) I **will establish his offspring forever** and **his throne as the days of the heavens**.

(Psalm 89:20-21, 24, 26-29 ESV)

In Psalm 89, YHWH is the speaker (see verses 15 and 19a). In verses 20, 21, and 24 YHWH speaks to David. In verse 24b, **the “horn” is a symbol of the Messiah, Jesus Christ**. Verses 26-28 are addressed to the Messiah – the descendant of David, his “offspring”. Verse 29 is again possibly addressed to David, **“his offspring”** being the Messiah; alternatively, if verse 29 is addressed to the Messiah, **“his offspring”** would be Christians. In either case, **the eternal throne belongs to the Messiah**.

The **Synoptists Luke and Matthew** are very particular to show that Jesus was physically descended from David to graphically demonstrate the fulfillment of this prophecy:

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. ... and **Salmon** the father of **Boaz** by Rahab, and Boaz the father of **Obed** by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and **Jesse the father of David the king**. And David was the father of **Solomon** by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of **Rehoboam** ... and Josiah the father of **Jechoniah** and his brothers, **at the time of the deportation to Babylon**. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of **Shealtiel**, and Shealtiel the father of **Zerubbabel** ... and **Jacob** the father of **Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ**. (Matthew 1:1, 5-7a, 11-12, 16 ESV)

Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, **being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph**, the **son of Heli** ... the **son of Joanan**, the **son of Rhesa**, the son of **Zerubbabel**, the **son of Shealtiel**, the **son of Neri** ... the **son of Nathan**, the **son of David**, the **son of Jesse**, the **son of Obed**, the **son of Boaz**, the **son of Sala** ... **the son of Abraham** ... **the son of Adam, the son of God**. (Luke 3:23, 27, 31b-32a, 34aβ, 38b ESV)

There is no way to definitively reconcile the differences between the two genealogies.²⁵⁴ The points of similarity are:

- Both genealogies identify Abraham as a predecessor
- Both genealogies identify David as a predecessor
- Both genealogies identify Shealtiel and Zerubbabel as predecessors
- Both genealogies identify Joseph as the object of the genealogy
- Both genealogies have unknown names between Zerubbabel and Joseph

The significant differences between the two genealogies are:

- Luke brings the descent through Nathan,²⁵⁵ son of Bathsheba, the full brother of Solomon
- The names from Nathan to Shealtiel are unknown
- Matthew brings the descent through Solomon
- The names from Solomon to Shealtiel are the kings of the Southern Kingdom

²⁵⁴ See the discussion of this in **Excursus 3 – Genealogies of Christ** in the paper **“David – a Man After My Own Heart”** located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

²⁵⁵ See 1 Chronicles 3:5

- Luke takes the genealogy all the way back to **“Adam, the son of God”**
- **Matthew starts with Abraham**

Matthew was writing to a “Jewish” audience, so **the Kingly line through Solomon was significant**. Luke was writing to a “Greek” audience for whom Israelite kings were irrelevant; but **a “universal” perspective was significant**. To “Jewish” Christians, Jesus was the final representative of the dynasty of David. To “Greek” Christians, Jesus was the universal saviour. **Both authors were very careful to show the link to Abraham, “the father of all who believe”**.²⁵⁶

The author of Hebrews goes to great lengths to demonstrate that **the Levitical/Aaronic priesthood is obsolete** and that **it has been replaced by the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ**:

For **every high priest chosen from among men** is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. **Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people**.

Now **if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood ... what further need would there have been for another priest to arise** ... rather than one named after the order of Aaron? ... Now **the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest**, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.

Since then **we have a great high priest** who has passed through the heavens, **Jesus, the Son of God**, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. **Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace**, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 5:1-3, 7:11, 8:1-2, 4:14-16 ESV)

Next, the author of Hebrews alludes to **the promise to Abraham**, and to the **“better covenant”** brokered by Jesus Christ, leading to the **“promised eternal inheritance”**, eternal life:

For when **God made a promise to Abraham**, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, **“Surely I will bless you and multiply you.”**²⁵⁷ And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ... But as it is, **Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises**. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. For he finds fault with them when he says:

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord,
when **I will establish a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,
not like the covenant that I made with their fathers
on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

For they did not continue in my covenant ... (Jeremiah 31:31-32)

But **when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come**, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) **he entered once for all into the holy places**, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but **by means of his own blood**, thus **securing an eternal redemption**. ... Therefore **he is the mediator of a new covenant**, so that **those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance** ... (Hebrews 6:13-15, 8:6-9, 9:11-12, 15a ESV)

During the Later Perean Ministry, shortly before the crucifixion, Jesus presented **the parable of Lazarus and the rich man**.²⁵⁸ The audience of the parable appears to be “the disciples” (see verse one of chapter sixteen). The objective of the parable is to prepare the disciples for the fact that after his death and resurrection, **people who refuse to believe the Writings of Moses, will still refuse to believe the fact of the resurrection**, with the clear implication that others not familiar with the Writings of Moses, i.e., Gentiles, will respond to the fact of the resurrection and the Apostles’ teaching:

But Abraham said, **‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’** And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but **if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.**’ He said to him, **‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’** (Luke 16:29-30 ESV)

²⁵⁶ See Romans 4:11,16, 9:7, Galatians 3:7-9, Hebrews 2:16, James 2:21; the epithet **“father of the faithful”** derives from Galatians 3:7.

²⁵⁷ See Genesis 22:17, 15:5

²⁵⁸ See Luke 16:19-31

Paul summarizes the relationship of Jesus with the promises:

For I tell you that **Christ became a servant to the circumcised** to show God's truthfulness, in order **to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs**, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. (Romans 15:8-9a ESV)

The prophecies of the Messiah run straight through the Old Testament starting with the "protoevangelium" in Genesis 3:15.²⁵⁹ The Plan of God has been complete from the foundation of the world. **The life and work of Jesus Christ the Messiah is the core of the Plan of God.** The promises to Abraham recorded in the Writings of Moses are the basis of the working out of the Plan of God. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promises.

11.3 The Promise of the Holy Spirit

From the beginning, Moses had the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.²⁶⁰ When the Israelites set out from Horeb, they very quickly began to complain about conditions in the desert.²⁶¹ **Moses was distraught and requested death:**

"... I am not able to carry all this people alone; **the burden is too heavy for me**. If you will treat me like this, **kill me at once**, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness." (Numbers 11:14-15 ESV)

YHWH had a better solution: he would **distribute the Holy Spirit upon a selection of the "elders of Israel"**²⁶² who could then assist Moses in leading the people:

Then **the LORD said to Moses, "Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel,** whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. And I will come down and talk with you there. And **I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them,** and **they shall bear the burden of the people with you,** so that you may not bear it yourself alone. ..." (Numbers 11:16-17 ESV)

The **Prophet Haggai** and the **Governor Nehemiah** allude to this incident. **Haggai** reports a saying of YHWH to encourage the people in his time to have faith to complete the construction of the Temple. **Nehemiah** alludes to the incident in a public prayer to strengthen the people of his time in their resolve to adhere to their covenant to serve YHWH:

Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, **according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt.** **My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.** (Haggai 2:4b-5 ESV)

... **you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness.** The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go. **You gave your good Spirit to instruct them** ... Because of all this **we make a firm covenant** in writing ... (Nehemiah 9:19-20a, 38a ESV)

King David was well aware of the necessity of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit:

Create in me a **clean heart**, O God, and renew a **right spirit** within me.
Cast me not away from your presence, and **take not your Holy Spirit from me.**
Restore to me the joy of **your salvation**, and uphold me with a **willing spirit.**
Teach me to do your will, for you are my God!
Let **your good Spirit lead me** on level ground! (Psalm 51:10-12, 143:10 ESV)

The **Prophets Joel and Isaiah** prophesized that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit would be the key to the success of the World Tomorrow:

You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you.
And **my people shall never again be put to shame.**
You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.
And it shall come to pass afterward, that **I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;**
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams,

²⁵⁹ For a listing of Messianic prophecies, Payne pages 665-670.

²⁶⁰ See Exodus 3:2-6; for Moses to touch the "holy ground", he had to be accounted "holy" by YHWH – this could occur only through the "indwelling of the Holy Spirit". Note that Moses never has to present a "sin" offering on his own behalf – he was under grace from the start.

²⁶¹ See Numbers 11:1-3

²⁶² See **Excursus 3 – The Elders of Israel**

and your young men shall see visions.
 Even on the male and female servants **in those days I will pour out my Spirit.** (Joel 2:26-29 ESV)
 But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen!
 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.
 ... **until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high,**
 and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.
 Then **justice will dwell** in the wilderness, and **righteousness abide** in the fruitful field.
 And the effect of righteousness will be **peace,**
 and the result of righteousness, **quietness and trust forever.**
 My people will abide in a **peaceful habitation,** in **secure dwellings,** and in **quiet resting places.**
 Behold **my servant,** whom I uphold, **my chosen,** in whom my [being] delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth **justice to the nations.**
He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established **justice in the earth;**
 and the coastlands wait for his [torah]. (Isaiah 44:1, 3, 32:15-18, 42:1,4 ESV)

The **Apostle John** reports **Jesus' promise,** on the night before the crucifixion, that the Holy Spirit would be distributed upon the apostles:

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and **he will give you another Helper,**²⁶³ **to be with you forever,** even **the Spirit of truth,** [which] the world cannot receive, because it neither sees [it] nor knows [it]. You know [it], for [it] **dwells with you and will be in you.**

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But **the Helper, the Holy Spirit,** [which] the Father will send in my name, [it] **will teach you all things** and **bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.**

But when **the Helper** comes, [which] I will send to you from the Father, **the Spirit of truth,** [which] proceeds from the Father, [it] **will bear witness about me.** And **you also will bear witness,** because you have been with me from the beginning.

Nevertheless, **I tell you the truth:** it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, **I will send [it] to you.**

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When **the Spirit of truth** comes, [it] **will guide you into all the truth,** for [it] will not speak on his own authority, but whatever [it] hears [it] will speak, and [it] will declare to you the things that are to come.
 (John 14:15-17, 25-26, 15:26-27, 16:7, 12-13 ESV)

The **Synoptist Luke** reports Jesus' final instructions to the apostles just before the Ascension:²⁶⁴

And while staying with them [Jesus] ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to **wait for the promise of the Father,** which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but **you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.**" (Acts 1:4-5 ESV)

On the Day of Pentecost, the promise was fulfilled – the Holy Spirit became generally available to all persons called by God:²⁶⁵

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** ... But **Peter,** standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and **addressed them:** "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ... But **this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel** ...

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, **delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.** ... **This Jesus God raised up,** and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and **having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.**

Now **when they heard this they were cut to the heart,** and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And **Peter said to them,** "**Repent** and **be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and **you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** For **the promise is for you** and **for your children** and **for all who are far off,** **everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.**" (Acts 2:1-4a, 14, 16, 22-23, 32-33, 37-39 ESV)

²⁶³ παράκλητος – paraklētos, "helper", "comforter", "advocate"; see GEL pages 623-624; see also 1 John 2:1 where it is used of Jesus Christ

²⁶⁴ See also Luke 24:49, John 20:22

²⁶⁵ See also Acts 10:44-48, Ephesians 1:13

Through the Holy Spirit, God gave Moses the strength to complete task of extricating the Israelites from Egypt. Also, **through the Holy Spirit, God gave Moses the understanding to record God's greatest outpouring of revelation to human beings**. Throughout the period of the Old Testament, God gave the Holy Spirit to select individuals as required to execute the Plan of God. The Prophets record that the Holy Spirit will be the operative force to create the World Tomorrow. **At the inception of the New Testament Church, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon many people** – the beginning of the general availability that will occur in the World Tomorrow.

11.4 The Promise of Salvation

There is nothing any human being can do to put God in a position where he must grant salvation to that person. All human beings have earned death through sin.²⁶⁶ **Salvation is the gift of God according to his grace** made possible by the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ:

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, **eternal life**. For the **wages of sin is death**, but **the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord**. ... Now to the one who works, his **wages are not counted as a gift but as his due**. ... But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the [nomos], although the [nomos] and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God **through faith [of] Jesus Christ for all who believe**. For there is no distinction: for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God, and are **justified by his grace as a gift**, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, **to be received by faith**. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. (Romans 6:22-23, 4:4, 3:21-25 ESV)

Just before his death, Moses cut a covenant with the Israelites – **the Covenant of Life**.²⁶⁷ This covenant is with each individual who is a True Worshipper of God. **The focus of the covenant is to "choose life" by living by the Way of God** – this is a prerequisite to consideration by God of a person's being a candidate for salvation, eternal life. The first twelve chapters of the Book of Deuteronomy are a summary by Moses of his teaching from God to the Israelites of the Way of God.²⁶⁸ **This material has been preserved by God for the benefit of True Christians at the end of the age:**

Now these things happened to them as an example, but **they were written down for our instruction**, on whom **the end of the ages has come**. (1 Corinthians 10:11 ESV)

For **whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction**, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4 ESV)

Concerning this salvation, the **prophets who prophesied about the grace** that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that **they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you** through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:10-12 ESV)

The Covenant of Life is a harbinger of the Covenant of Baptism – the New Covenant. **The covenants given to Israel reveal God's Grace – the New Covenant realizes God's grace:**

... remember that **you were at that time separated from Christ**, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and **strangers to the covenants of promise**, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:12-13 ESV)

But as it is, **Christ** has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as **the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises**. (Hebrews 8:6 ESV)

The **Apostle Paul discusses the relationship between grace and salvation:**

But **God, being rich in mercy**, because of the great love with which he loved us, even **when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ**—by grace you [are being] saved²⁶⁹—and **raised us up with him** and **seated us with him in the heavenly places** in Christ Jesus, so that **in the coming ages he**

²⁶⁶ See Romans 3:23, 6:23

²⁶⁷ See Deuteronomy chapters 29 and 30; see also the discussion of this covenant in section 5. *The Covenant of Life* in the paper "Covenants of Grace" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca; this covenant was discussed briefly in the current paper in section 8.1 *The Structure of the Book of Deuteronomy*.

²⁶⁸ See the discussion of these chapters in the paper "The Words of Eternal Life" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

²⁶⁹ The ESV has "**have been saved**": the Greek phrase, also verse 8, is "ἐστέ σωσμένοι" - este sesōmenoi; este is a "Verb: second plural, present active indicative" from εἶμι - eimi; sesōmenoi is a "Verb: perfect passive participle, nominative plural masculine" from σώζω - sōzō (See www.eesv.org Greek Word Detail). "Present active" implies ongoing action; a "participle" implies an ongoing state of being; hence **the Greek is better translated** "are being brought to saving" – "**are being saved**".

might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you [are being] saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God ... (Ephesians 2:4-8 ESV)

The verb tenses in the above passage are difficult – Paul speaks as though salvation is accomplished. This is an expression of faith – God will accomplish his purpose.²⁷⁰ The verb translated “raised us up with him” is συνεγείρω – synegeirō. Paul uses it also in Colossians 2:12 and 3:1 where it is clear that he is talking about being “raised” out of the water after baptism – that is the beginning of the Christian Life, the beginning of living by the Way of God. Jesus Christ is now our High Priest and Intercessor²⁷¹ – it is as though he has “seated us with him in the heavenly places”, i.e., before the throne of God the Father. In this position of God’s grace, God can ultimately “show the immeasurable riches” to us, i.e., eternal life “in the ages to come”. But, it is purely God’s gift by grace “through faith” – faith does NOT in any way entitle a person to salvation: faith is required to trust the promise of God that he will complete his purpose and grant the gift of eternal life.

With reference to Abraham, as recorded in the Writings of Moses, the Apostle Paul discussed the relationship between faith, works, and righteousness:

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”²⁷²

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness ... How then was it counted to him? ... The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe ... (Romans 4:1-5, 10a, 11bα ESV)

As human beings, we cannot be “righteous”. No “works” can make a person “righteous”. To be righteous means to be Holy – only God is Holy. To be in the presence of God, God must account a person “holy”: nothing that is “common” or “unclean” can come in contact with something “holy”.²⁷³ Through “faith”, which is a gift of God,²⁷⁴ by the application of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God can account a person “righteous”, “holy”, which allows contact with God. For a more complete discussion of this topic see section **11. Faith AND Works** in the paper “True Worship of the True God” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

The author of Hebrews recounts how Abraham lived by faith, by the Way of God:

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16 ESV)

The “city”, the “homeland”, and the “better country” are metaphors for the Kingdom of God. Abraham and the others mention in Hebrews chapter eleven “all died in faith”, having lived by the Way of God, not the way of the world, recognizing that “they were strangers and exiles on the earth”. The Kingdom of God is “prepared for them”. The Apostle John summarizes:

Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he made to us— eternal life. (1 John 2:24-25 ESV)

The promise of salvation began with Abraham as recorded in the Writings of Moses. Abraham became the “father of the faithful” – True Worshipers of the True God in whom is the indwelling of the Holy

²⁷⁰ See Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13

²⁷¹ See Hebrews 4:14-16, 7:24-25, 8:1-2, 9:12,24, 10:12,19-21, 1 John 2:1

²⁷² See Genesis 15:6

²⁷³ See Leviticus 10:1-3,10; see also section **6. Holiness**, in the paper “To Be a Priest”, located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

²⁷⁴ See Ephesians 2:8, Galatians 5:23, Hebrews 6:4, James 1:17

Spirit. The New Testament authors are clear that **salvation is only available by God's grace** – eternal life his God's free gift. **Faith is required to live by the Way of God** – faith is God's gift through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Living by the Way of God is a prerequisite to be considered as a candidate for the gift of eternal life.

11.5 The Promise of the Resurrection

The resurrection is the means whereby God grants the gift of eternal life, salvation, to human beings:

I tell you this, brothers: **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**. For **the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed**. For this **perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality**. (1 Corinthians 15:50-53 ESV)

... **we who are alive**, who are left until the coming of the Lord, **will not precede those who have fallen asleep**. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and **with the sound of the trumpet** of God. And **the dead in Christ will rise first**. **Then we who are alive**, who are left, will be caught up together with them ... (1 Thessalonians 4:15b-17a ESV)

In refuting a stock question from some Sadducees,²⁷⁵ **Jesus asserts that the promise of the resurrection was first made to Moses**. As the "God of the living", **the dead patriarchs must be resurrected**:

Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because **you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God**? For **when they rise from the dead**, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

And **as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses**, in the passage about the bush,²⁷⁶ how God spoke to him, saying, **'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'**?²⁷⁷ **He is not God of the dead, but of the living**. You are quite wrong." (Mark 12:24-27 ESV // Matthew 22:29-33 // Luke 20:34-40)

When Jesus' friend Lazarus died,²⁷⁸ Jesus performed one of his most impactful public miracles: in the witness of the assembled mourners, **Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead**. **Jesus' purpose was to demonstrate that he has the power to grant life**. Those persons to whom he, and the Father, determine to grant the gift of eternal life will participate in a resurrection to immortality:

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." **Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."**

Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." **Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die**. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." **Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"** So they took away the stone.

And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, **"Lazarus, come out."** The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." (John 11:21-27, 38-44 ESV)

Jesus had previously discussed his role in the resurrection:

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. For **as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will**. ... Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when **the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live**. For **as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself**. ..." (John 5:19-21, 25-26 ESV)

²⁷⁵ See Mark 12:18-33 // Matthew 22:23-28 // Luke 20:27-33

²⁷⁶ See Exodus 3:2-6

²⁷⁷ See also Matthew 8:11, Acts 3:13

²⁷⁸ See John 11:1-17

In his definition of a Christian, the Apostle Paul is explicit on the role of the resurrection:

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact **the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.** But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, **he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit [which] dwells in you.** (Romans 8:9-11 ESV)

Paul affirms that **this is the promise of God the Father and Jesus Christ:**

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God **according to the promise of the life** that is in Christ Jesus ... (2 Timothy 1:1 ESV)

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in **hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began** ... (Titus 1:1-2 ESV)

Once the First Resurrection has occurred, **the Kingdom God can be established:**

Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And **he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.** (Matthew 24:30-31 ESV)

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, **"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and she shall reign forever and ever."** (Revelation 11:15 ESV)

The purpose of God is to give the Kingdom to those persons to whom he chooses to give the gift of eternal life:

Fear not, little flock, for **it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.** (Luke 12:32 ESV)

This the promise of God:

Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be **rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom,** which he has **promised to those who love him?** (James 2:5 ESV)

The author of Hebrews compares the Kingdom to a "rest" like the Sabbath:

Therefore, **while the promise of entering his rest still stands,** let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. ... So then, **there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,** for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. **Let us therefore strive to enter that rest,** so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:1, 9-11 ESV)

The Plan of God provides for the resurrection from the dead as the necessary method whereby God transforms human being into divine member of his Family. **In speaking with Moses** from the burning bush, **YHWH affirmed that the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, would be resurrected.** The New Testament authors affirm that the resurrection will occur to fulfill the promise of God to grant the gift of eternal life.

11.6 Paul and *nomos*

Many theologians have tried to use the Apostle Paul's use of the word "***nomos***" to argue that in some way the Writings of Moses are obsolete – "**the law is done away**". **The motivation of these people is very transparent.**²⁷⁹ The whole thesis of this document is that **the Writings of Moses are the foundation of all revelation from God to humanity** – the "**words of eternal life**".²⁸⁰ So **what does Paul have to say about *nomos*?**

The origin and usage of the word "***nomos***" is discussed in **Excursus 8 – *torah* and *nomos*.** **Briefly the word is of pagan origin.** The Jews of the third century before Christ chose to translate *torah* by *nomos* in an effort to **conform the revelation of God to pagan philosophy.** The resulting usage in the Jewish translation of the Old Testament, we call the Septuagint, became normative. The New Testament authors used the Septuagint extensively, so the word "***nomos***" became ubiquitous for the Writings of Moses. This translation came into English through the Old Latin Bible and the Vulgate as "***law***". **The**

²⁷⁹ See the discussion of Romans 1:18-28 in section 1. **The Documentary Hypothesis.**

²⁸⁰ See John 6:68

Writings of Moses should NEVER be called “law”: they are “torah”²⁸¹ – “teaching”, “instruction”, “direction”; the revealed Word of God, the words of eternal life.

To a Jew in the First Century, like Paul, the word **“nomos” had a very broad but at the same time inclusive sense.** With respect to the teaching of God, *nomos* included everything in the Writings of Moses. The term is even used with reference to other parts of the Old Testament.²⁸² In particular, **nomos included** the Ten Commandments, the statutes, *mish^epatim*, the covenant agreements, even narrative material, and **very much the sacrificial instructions.** But in addition to this, there were all **the interpretations of the Pharisees** – to a Jew, these were just as much a part of the “*nomos*” as the writings of Moses; and to adherents of the Pharisees, they were at least as binding as the Writings of Moses. The term was also used of civil and criminal law. At times, we can see Paul distinguish some of these particulars. At other times, he uses the term very broadly. **The most important documents to be considered are The Book of Romans and the Epistle to the Galatians.**

11.6.1 The Book of Romans

The Book of Romans, although formally an epistle, is **a theological treatise.**²⁸³ It contains Paul’s most carefully thought-out argumentation and systematic thinking. The Church in Rome had apparently started without apostolic leadership.²⁸⁴

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ... and **visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes** ... (Acts 2:5, 10bβ-11aα ESV)

I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, **filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.** (Romans 15:14 ESV)

However, **certain problems had developed in the Church of Rome.** Paul is attempting to set the Church on the right path. He addresses some of the problems:

But **on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder,** because of the grace given me by God ... (Romans 15:15 ESV)

- The Church comprised both **Jews and Greeks** – a significant dynamic in the Church:
For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to **the Jew first and also to the Greek.** ... Then **what advantage has the Jew?** ... What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, **both Jews and Greeks, are under sin** ... Or **is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also?** Yes, of Gentiles also ... For **there is no distinction between Jew and Greek** ... (Romans 1:16, 3:1a, 9, 29, 10:12a ESV; see also Romans 2:9-10, 4:9, 11:1-36, 15:8-13)
- Some Church members had fallen into **“judging”** each other:
Therefore **you have no excuse,** O man, **every one of you who judges.** For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ... **Why do you pass judgment on your brother?** Or you, why do you despise your brother? For **we will all stand before the judgment seat of God** ... (Romans 2:1, 14:10 ESV)
- Some held to a notion of **“justification by works”**:
But if you call yourself a Jew and **rely on the [nomos]** and boast in God ... For **by works of the [nomos] no human being will be justified** ... For **the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking** ... (Romans 2:17, 3:20a, 14:17a ESV)
- Some held that **“grace”** exonerated sin:
What shall we say then? **Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?** By no means! **How can we who died to sin still live in it?** ... What then? **Are we to sin because we are not under [nomos] but under grace?** **By no means!** (Romans 6:1-2, 15 ESV see also 3:6)
- Some held that **“election”** showed partisanship by God:
“Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ... though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that **God’s purpose of election might continue** ... As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” ... But **who are you, O man, to answer back to God?** Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” **Has the potter no**

²⁸¹ See **Excursus 3 – torah** in the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

²⁸² See, for example, John 10:34 alluding to Psalm 82:6, John 15:25 alluding to Psalm 35:19 or 69:4.

²⁸³ See Guthrie page 398

²⁸⁴ The traditions that Peter spent time in Rome are based on late and unverifiable legends. If Peter had been in Rome, Paul would NOT likely have interfered: ... “I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised ...” (Galatians 2:7 ESV). There is certainly no indication in the Book of Romans or the prison epistles that Peter had ever been in Rome. It is far more likely that Peter ended up in the area of Babylon, where there were large numbers of Jews: “She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.” (1 Peter 5:13 ESV)

right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? (Romans 9:7b, 11a, 13, 20-21 ESV)

- Some held that Greeks had the preeminence due to the sin of the Jews:
I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. ... But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. (Romans 11:1-2a, 17-18 ESV)
- Some held that only “faith” is required, not Christian “works”:
That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace ... Therefore, since we have been justified by faith ... I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ... Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them ... (Romans 4:16a, 12:1, 6a ESV)
- Some felt Christianity superseded civil authority:
Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ... Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes ... (Romans 13:1, 5-6a ESV)

It is in dealing with these issues that Paul repeatedly comes back to “nomos”. Paul never explicitly addresses the issue of the various meanings of “nomos” or of its suitability as a translation of *torah* – **he simply uses the term as it was commonly used in his time.**

Paul clearly states his purpose in writing to the Church in Rome, **Paul’s thesis**:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”²⁸⁵ (Romans 1:16-17 ESV)

The “gospel” is the “power of God” – God’s word, as recorded in the Bible is all powerful. God’s purpose is to bring “salvation” to human beings, to bring human beings into his Family. This requires calling by God to bring individuals to a state of believing the Word of God – the gospel. There is no distinction or preference based on “race” (or, by implication, status, position, or any other measure of human achievement). The objective of the Gospel message is to reveal “the righteousness of God”, to which human beings must attain to be granted entry into the God Family. The righteousness of God is only understandable by “faith” (faith is a gift from God upon conversion²⁸⁶). The purpose of understanding “faith” is to grow in “faith” making it the basis of life. Paul’s thesis governs the material in the Book of Romans. This paper focuses in this section on those parts of the Book of Romans which deal with the concept of “nomos”.

In **chapter two**, Paul first addresses the issue of judging one another; then he ties this into the tension between the “Jewish” and “Greek” factions:

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.

There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. (Romans 2:1, 9-10 ESV)

Then **Paul goes to the heart of the matter**. Apparently, some members of the Church, presuming to have a superior knowledge of “nomos”, took it upon themselves to instruct others. But they missed the point of the Writings of Moses by focussing on “outward and physical” things rather than “a matters of the heart”:

(12) For all who have sinned without the [nomos] will also perish without the [nomos], and all who have sinned under the [nomos] will be judged by the [nomos]. (13) For it is not the hearers of the [nomos] who are righteous before God, but the doers of the [nomos] who will be justified. (14) For when Gentiles, who do not have the [nomos], by nature do what the [nomos] requires, they are a [nomos] to themselves, even though they do not have the [nomos]. (15) They show that the work of the [nomos] is written on their hearts ... (Romans 2:12-15a ESV)

²⁸⁵ See Habakkuk 2:4

²⁸⁶ See footnote 274

In response to “the teachers”, with their supposed superior knowledge of “nomos”, Paul is actually making **a mocking play on the word, “nomos”**. **Verse 12**, sin results in death regardless of knowledge. **Verse 13**, Paul states a truth, living by the Way of God is a prerequisite to justification. Knowledge without action is useless. **Verses 14 and 15**, Paul makes the point that correct ethical behaviour is of more value than knowledge without action. **Paul uses “nomos” in a very broad sense**. In **verse 14**, “they are a *nomos* to themselves”, is proverbial.

Next, **Paul directly challenges “the teachers” credibility**:

(17) But if **you call yourself a Jew** and rely on the [nomos] and boast in God (18) and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the [nomos]; (19) and if you are sure that you yourself are a **guide to the blind**, a **light to those who are in darkness**, (20) an **instructor** of the foolish, a **teacher** of children, having in the [nomos] the embodiment of knowledge and truth— (21) **you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself?** ... (23) **You who boast in the [nomos] dishonor God by breaking the [nomos]**. (Romans 2:17-21a, 23 ESV)

Verses 17 and 18, “the teachers” appealing to their status as “Jews” claimed superior knowledge. **Verses 19 and 20**, they claimed this gave them the right to be “instructors”. **Verses 21 and 23**, Paul challenges them as hypocrites – they presumed to teach the Way of God but did NOT understand the spiritual implications. **Here Paul uses “nomos” to imply the teaching contained in the Writings of Moses**.

Finally, **Paul clearly reiterates the problem**: “the teachers” do NOT understand the spiritual implications of the Writings of Moses:

(25) For **circumcision** indeed is of value if you **obey the [nomos]**, but if you **break the [nomos]**, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. (26) So, if a man who is uncircumcised **keeps the precepts of the [nomos]**, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? (27) Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the [nomos] will condemn you who have **the written code and circumcision** but break the [nomos]. (28) **For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical**. (29) But **a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter**. His praise is not from man but from God. (Romans 2:25-29 ESV)

Paul uses “circumcision” as a metaphor for being a “Jew” – it was the sign of the covenant with Abraham.²⁸⁷ **To be a true child of Abraham, a person must be circumcised in the heart**.²⁸⁸ **Verse 25**, to “**obey the nomos**” means to live by the Way of God; to “**break the nomos**” implies knowing the Way of God and flagrantly turning away from it. **Verses 26 and 27**, even with extensive knowledge of the “written code”, physical circumcision means nothing unless a person lives by the Way of God, “**keeps the precepts of the nomos**”. **Verses 28 and 29**, a true “Jew”, a true “child of Abraham”, **a True Christian, is a person who is spiritually circumcised in the heart**.

In **chapter three**, Paul continues with the Jew/Greek issue and uses it as a segue into a discussion of the relationship between *nomos* and sin:

(9) What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that **all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin** ...

(19) Now we know that **whatever the [nomos] says** it speaks to **those who are under the [nomos]**, so that every mouth may be stopped, and **the whole world may be held accountable to God**. (20) For **by works of the [nomos] no human being will be justified** in his sight, since **through the [nomos] comes knowledge of sin**. (Romans 3:9, 19-20 ESV)

The Writings of Moses define sin. To be “**under the nomos**” is the same as being “**under sin**”, under the penalty of sin – death. **Verse 19**, by “**whatever the nomos says**”, Paul is looking forward to the statement “**through the nomos comes knowledge of sin**”, in **verse 20**. The definition of sin is required in order that “**the whole world may be held accountable to God**”. If a person is living by the Way of God, that person is NOT under sin, but under grace.

²⁸⁷ See Genesis 17:11

²⁸⁸ See Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4, 9:24-25, Acts 7:51, Romans 4:12, Philippians 3:3, Colossians 2:11
Wednesday, May 22, 2024

The Apostle John defines “sin” as a way of life contrary to the Way of God:

Everyone who **makes a practice of sinning** also **practices lawlessness**,²⁸⁹ **sin is lawlessness**. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. **No one who abides in him keeps on sinning**; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. (1 John 3:4-6 ESV)

To be **“under sin”, “under the nomos”**, implies being **under the penalty of sin which is death, and sin is defined by nomos**:

... for **all have sinned** ... **the wages of sin is death** ... The **sting of death is sin**, and the **power of sin is the [nomos]**. (Romans 3:23a, 6:23a, 1 Corinthians 15:56 ESV)

In **Romans chapter three**, Paul continues to discuss the relationship between “justification” and “nomos”. To be **“justified” means to be accounted “righteous” by God**. Human beings can be accounted “righteous” only through “faith” which is a gift of God upon conversion.²⁹⁰ **We cannot on our own acquire “faith”**; it is only available through God’s grace:

(21) But now **the righteousness of God** has been **manifested apart from the [nomos]**, although the [nomos] and the Prophets bear witness to it— (22) the **righteousness of God through faith [of]**²⁹¹ **Jesus Christ for all who believe**. For there is no distinction: (23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (24) and are **justified by his grace as a gift**, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (25) whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, **to be received by faith**. (Romans 3:21-25a ESV)

God’s purpose is to share his righteousness with “all who believe”, True Worshipers, True Christians. Justification is available only by grace to be received by faith – this is **“apart from the nomos” (verse 21)**, because nothing we can do can earn justification – including living by the Way of God, which is defined in **“the nomos”²⁹² and the Prophets” (verse 21)**. We can only be **“justified by his grace as a gift” (verse 24)**. God gives us the **“faith of Jesus Christ” (verses 22 and 25)** to trust in this promise.

Finally, Paul drives home the point that nothing we can do, **“human boasting”**, can earn justification:

(27) **Then what becomes of our boasting?** It is excluded. By what kind of [nomos]? By a [nomos] of works? No, **but by the [nomos] of faith**. (28) For we hold that **one is justified by faith apart from works** of the [nomos]. (29) Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, (30) since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. (31) **Do we then overthrow the [nomos] by this faith?** By no means! **On the contrary, we uphold the [nomos]**. (Romans 3:27-31 ESV)

In this section, Paul is again making a **play on words** – in **verse 27**, he uses “nomos” in the sense of a “rule” or a “standard” with no reference to the Writings of Moses. **Verse 28**, nomos does refer to the Writings of Moses, which define the Way of God, but even a perfect life,²⁹³ lived by the Way of God, is NOT sufficient to “earn” salvation. **Verse 31**, Paul rhetorically asks if **“faith nullifies or abolishes the Writings of Moses”**? His certain response is absolutely not – faith establishes the Writings of Moses because **faith from God is only available to those who are called, believe, and live by the Way of God**.

Having established the relationship between “faith” and “righteousness” in chapter three, Paul continues in **chapter four**, verses one through twelve, to establish **Abraham** as **“the father” of those who “walk in the footsteps of the faith”**.²⁹⁴ The “Jewish” faction in the Church of Rome apparently claimed preeminence due to physical descent from Abraham. This was manifest in their claiming superiority as **“adherents of the nomos”**:

(13) For **the promise to Abraham** and his offspring that he would be heir of the world **did not come through the [nomos] but through the righteousness of faith**. (14) For if it is **the adherents of the [nomos]** who are to be the heirs, **faith is null and the promise is void**. (15) For the [nomos] brings wrath, but where there is no [nomos] there is no transgression. (16) That is why **it depends on faith**, in order **that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring**—not only to the adherent of the [nomos] but also **to the one who shares the faith of Abraham**, who is **the father of us all**, (17) as it is written, “I have made you the **father of many nations**”²⁹⁵ ... (Romans 4:13-17a ESV)

²⁸⁹ The Greek is ἀνομία - anomia, “lawlessness”, “wickedness”; the antithesis of living by the Way of God; see GEL page71.

²⁹⁰ See footnote 274

²⁹¹ The Greek is πίστει - pisteōs, “genitive singular feminine” (see ESV Greek Word Detail); therefore “of” is preferred over “in”.

²⁹² Here “nomos” is the Writings of Moses.

²⁹³ No human being is capable of living a “perfect” life.

²⁹⁴ See Romans 4:12

²⁹⁵ See Genesis 17:5, 35:11

The “Jewish” faction claimed their historic position as “adherents of the *nomos*” gave them preeminence as the “promised” descendants: i.e., as Paul had acknowledged, the Jews had been entrusted with the written word of God:

Then **what advantage has the Jew?** Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, **the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.** (Romans 3:1-2 ESV)

In **verse 13** of **chapter four**, **Paul is emphatic that the promise to Abraham was not a matter of *nomos***, but of faith – Abraham was accounted righteous, worthy to receive the promise, because he believed God, he demonstrated faith. **Nothing Abraham had done made him worthy of God’s grace.** **Verse 14**, Paul goes on to say that if in fact only the Jews of the Roman Church were the “legitimate” heirs of the promise, the promise is worthless. **Verse 15**, **Paul is philosophical:** the Writings of Moses do indeed prescribe “wrath” for those who refuse to believe; and, **proverbially**, “transgression” can only occur where there is a “prescription” to violate. **Verses 16 and 17**, clarify the matter: **the promise of grace is for all human beings who become true children of Abraham**, indeed he is the **“father of many nations”**.

In **chapter five**, **Paul moves on to soteriology**, the salvific acts of Jesus Christ. He makes a lengthy comparison between Adam and Jesus. There are two references to *nomos*:

(12) Therefore, just as **sin came into the world through one man**, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— (13) for **sin indeed was in the world before the [nomos]** was given, but **sin is not counted where there is no [nomos]**.

(20) Now **the [nomos] came in to increase the trespass**, but where sin *increased*, **grace abounded** all the more, (21) so that, as sin reigned in death, **grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.** (Romans 5:12-13, 20-21 ESV)

Verse 12, sin was introduced by Adam. **Verse 13**, the *nomos* was given to Moses much later – this formalized God’s requirements of human beings. This was the beginning of God’s working out his Plan of Salvation. Before this, **“sin is not counted”**, because there was no formal way to deal with it. Before the revelation to Moses, sin existed, but now God would work towards a way to eradicate sin. **Verse 20**, **“increase”²⁹⁶** is in the sense of **“highlight”** or **“make more visible”**, which contrasts with the **“grace abounded”** – through the salvific acts of Jesus Christ. The revelations to Moses have made sin visible. The salvific acts of Jesus Christ have made grace possible **“leading to eternal life”**.

In **chapter six**, Paul deals with the issue of **“grace exonerating sin”**. Again, there are two references to *nomos*. Paul establishes the contradiction in “sinning” after conversion, then makes a statement and asks a rhetorical question:

(1) What shall we say then? **Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?** (2) By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

(14) For sin will have no dominion over you, since **you are not under [nomos] but under grace.** (15) What then? **Are we to sin because we are not under [nomos] but under grace?** By no means! (Romans 6:14-15 ESV)

Verse 14, to be **“under nomos”** means to be **under the penalty of sin, death.** **Verse 14**, Grace delivers a Christian from this penalty. **Verse 15**, this is a restatement of the question in verse one, to which Paul has already established the contradiction. The nuance here is that **some erroneously contend “once saved always saved”**. Conversion takes a person from being under the penalty of death to being under grace; but, this is NOT an immovable position – **one can fall from grace and return to the penalty of death.**

In **chapter seven**, Paul returns to **the supposed privilege of the “Jewish” faction** due to their relationship with the *nomos*. **Paul starts out with an analogy:** the *nomos*, both God’s *nomos* and civil *nomos*, proscribes a second marriage of a woman while the first husband is alive. Paul asserts that life prior to conversion is like a marriage to sin, **living “under the nomos”**, the penalty of death. **In baptism, a death occurs**, the Christian rises to a new life and can **“belong to another”**, i.e., live in “marriage” to Jesus Christ:

²⁹⁶ The Greek verb is πλεονάζω - pleonazō, for which “increase” is a good translation (see GEL page 673). “Sin” has increased because it is identified, made visible.

(1) Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the [nomos]—that the [nomos] is binding on a person only as long as he lives? (2) For a married woman is bound by [nomos] to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the [nomos] of marriage. (3) Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that [nomos], and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. (4) Likewise, my brothers,²⁹⁷ you also have died to the [nomos] through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. (5) For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, [defined] by the [nomos],²⁹⁸ were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. (6) But now we are released from the [nomos], having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code. (Romans 7:1-6 ESV)

Verse 1, Paul addresses “Jewish” Christians. All uses of *nomos* in verses one through three imply both civil and divine *nomos*. **Verse 4**, “you also have died to the *nomos*” alludes to the watery grave of baptism from which one arises in newness of life²⁹⁹ no longer “under the *nomos*”, the penalty of sin, death. **Verse 5**, the teaching of God, the *nomos*, instructs a Christian on what is sin. **Verse 6**, the death of baptism releases a Christian from the penalty of death, being under the *nomos*; and, the *nomos* teaches the Christian how to live by the spirit, not the letter – here Paul is alluding to Pharisaic interpretations.

Continuing in **chapter seven**, there seems to have been a reaction by the “Greek” Christians to the overbearing demeanour of the “teachers”. In recoil, they questioned the very premise of the *nomos* of God. In answer to this, Paul makes one of his clearest statements as to the authority and efficacy of “the *nomos* of God”:

(7) What then shall we say? That the [nomos] is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the [nomos], I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the [nomos] had not said, “You shall not covet.” (8) But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the [nomos], sin lies dead. (9) I was once alive apart from the [nomos], but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. (10) The very commandment that promised life³⁰⁰ proved to be death to me. (11) For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. (12) So the [nomos] is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. (Romans 7:7-12 ESV)

In this whole section, Paul uses “commandment”, i.e., the Ten Commandments, as interchangeable for “*nomos*”.³⁰¹ **Verse 7**, some were suggesting that “*nomos*” is sin. Paul is adamant, “by no means”, because the *nomos* defines sin and to live by the Way of God, one needs to know what sin is, and avoid it. Paul uses the example of the tenth commandment, covetousness, which is purely spiritual and unknowable without God’s revelation. **Verse 8**, without the definition of sin, a person cannot be convicted and repent – “sin lies dead” apart from *nomos* because it is NOT recognized. **Verse 9**, before conversion a person lives in ignorance of sin. After conversion, understanding of the “commandment”, *nomos*, the teaching of God, makes “sin come alive”, i.e., be recognized, and the old man is put to death. **Verse 10**, the Way of God opens the door to life, but first repentance and “death” of the old man³⁰² is required. **Verse 11**, only through “the commandment” can a person know sin and therefore repent. **Verse 12**, is Paul’s very clear statement on the nature of “the *nomos* of God”, the teaching of God, epitomised in the Ten Commandments.

Still in **chapter seven**, Paul addresses another question, which may have been hypothetical: “if the teaching of God, the *nomos*, is good, how can it bring death?” In dealing with this question, Paul gets

²⁹⁷ Greek: ἀδελφοί - adelphoi, “bretherin”, “fellow believers” – both male and female

²⁹⁸ The ESV translation of “aroused” is common to modern translations (the old King James does NOT use it). The word is NOT in the Greek – it is supplied by the translator. The phrase in Greek is: τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν τὰ διὰ τοῦ νόμου – ta pathemata ton hamartion ta dia tou nomos, “the passions the sinful the through the *nomos*”. The word “παθήματα” more commonly means “suffering” (see Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 1:5,6,7, Philippians 3:10, Colossians 1:24, 2 Timothy 3:11, Hebrews 2:9,10, 10:32, 1 Peter 1:11, 4:13, 5:1,9). But in Galatians 5:24, Paul clearly uses “παθήματα” with a sense of “passions” or “desires”, which is a legitimate usage (see GEL page 607). The phrase “τὰ διὰ τοῦ νόμου” is more like an apposition to “τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν”: the *nomos* is the defining agent of the sinful passions, NOT the cause of the passions.

²⁹⁹ See Romans 6:4

³⁰⁰ See Ephesians 6:2-3, Deuteronomy 30:16; here in Romans 8, Paul is alluding to the Ten Commandments in general.

³⁰¹ The word “*torah*” is inclusive of all teaching of God, including the Ten Commandments.

³⁰² In the watery grave of Baptism, see Romans 6:4

to the very heart of human nature – our inherent proclivity to sin and our complete inability to avoid sin by only our human power:

(13) Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. (14) For we know that the [nomos] is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. (15) For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

(16) Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the [nomos], that it is good. (17) So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. (18) For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. (19) For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. (20) Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

(21) So I find it to be a [nomos] that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. (22) For I delight in the [nomos] of God, in my inner being, (23) but I see in my members another [nomos] waging war against the [nomos] of my mind and making me captive to the [nomos] of sin that dwells in my members.

(24) Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (25) Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the [nomos] of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the [nomos] of sin. (Romans 7:13-25 ESV)

Verse 13, Paul establishes that the premise of the question is false: the good teaching of God does NOT bring death. It is sin which brings death – the teaching of God defines sin and shows the way to be delivered from the penalty of sin. **Verses 14 through 20** thoroughly define the problem of human nature. In **verses 14 and 16**, “nomos” is the teaching of God. In **verses 17 through 20**, Paul is asserting that because of the human proclivity to sin, it is not possible to perfectly live by the Way of God. There is no inherent “goodness” in human beings, “nothing good dwells in me”. This requires on-going repentance.

In **verses 21 through 25**, Paul becomes philosophical: he defines a new “nomos” – the “nomos of sin” by which he means the natural proclivity of human beings to sin. This is contrasted with the “nomos of the mind” by which Paul means the converted desire to live by the Way of God, the teaching of God, “the nomos of God”. **Verse 24**, we can only be delivered from sin by the Holy Spirit through the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ, “who will deliver me from this body of death”. **Verse 25**, our innermost desire is to perfectly live by the Way of God, “serve the nomos of God”, but while we are human, we must struggle with our proclivity to sin, “serve the nomos of sin”.

Moving on from “thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord”, Paul proceeds in **chapter eight** to define being a Christian, living a Christian life, and the bounty of God’s love. In the first eight verses, he continues the thought from chapter seven:

(1) There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (2) For the [nomos] of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the [nomos] of sin and death. (3) For God has done what the [nomos], weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, (4) in order that the righteous requirement of the [nomos] might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

(5) For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. (6) For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. (7) For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s [nomos]; indeed, it cannot. (8) Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:1-8 ESV)

Verse 2, “the nomos of the Spirit” is the same as “the nomos of the mind”³⁰³ - the converted desire to live by the Way of God, which can come only through the Holy Spirit. “The nomos of sin and death” is as defined in chapter seven – the innate human proclivity to sin which leads to death. In **verses 3 and 4**, nomos refers to The Writings of Moses. The Israelites were not capable of living by the Way of God because they did NOT have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Through Christ’s sacrifice, the Holy Spirit is available to those called by God – it is therefore possible to live by the Way of God, “the righteous requirement of the nomos.”

³⁰³ See Romans 7:23

In **verses 5 through 8**, Paul summarizes: without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the human mind is set only on physical things – it is “**hostile to God**”. Those without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are unable to “**submit to God’s *nomos***”, **to live by the Way of God**.

Having defined being a Christian in chapter eight, Paul’s thoughts return to the Plan of God and the role of Israel in fulfilling that Plan. This is the theme of chapters nine, ten, and eleven. Paul uses the word “*nomos*” only thrice in these chapters, but also **refers to the Writings of Moses in other ways**. Paul starts off in chapter nine by listing some of the benefits of the Plan of Salvation given to Israel. **The primary benefit being the Messiah:**

They are Israelites, and to them belong the **adoption**, the **glory**, the **covenants**, **the [nomothesia]**, the **worship**, and the **promises**. To them belong the **patriarchs**, and **from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ**, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 9:4-5 ESV)

Paul alludes to many benefits recorded in the Writings of Moses:

- **Adoption**.³⁰⁴
Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, **Israel is my firstborn son** ...’ (Exodus 4:22 ESV)
- **Glory**:
... and **the glory of the LORD** filled the tabernacle. (Exodus 40:34b ESV)
- **Covenants**:
On that day **the LORD made a covenant with Abram**, saying, “To your offspring I give this land ...” (Genesis 15:18a ESV)
Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and **keep my covenant** ... (Exodus 19:5a ESV)
And he said, “Behold, **I am making a covenant**. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. ...” (Exodus 34:10a ESV)
These **are the words of the covenant** that the LORD commanded Moses **to make with the people of Israel** in the land of Moab, **besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb**. (Deuteronomy 29:1 ESV)
- **Worship**:
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 from afar**. ...” (Exodus 24:1 ESV)
On the eighth day **Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel**, and he said to Aaron, “Take for yourself a bull calf for a sin offering ... and **offer them before the LORD**. And say **to the people of Israel**, ‘Take a male goat for a sin offering ... to **sacrifice before the LORD**, and a grain offering mixed with oil, for **today the LORD will appear to you**.’” (Leviticus 9:1-4 ESV)
And behold, now **I bring the first of the fruit of the ground**, which you, O LORD, have given me. And you shall **set it down before the LORD your God and worship before the LORD your God**. (Deuteronomy 26:10 ESV)
- **Promises**:
Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And **I will make of you a great nation**, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed**.” ... Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “**To your offspring I will give this land**.” (Genesis 12:1-3, 7a ESV)
- **Patriarchs**:
And so **Abraham** became the father of **Isaac**, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of **Jacob**, and Jacob of **the twelve patriarchs**. (Acts 7:8b ESV)

The word νομοθεσία - **nomothesia** means “**giving of the *nomos***”.³⁰⁵ This is the only occurrence of the word in the New Testament. **Paul has in mind the complete process** of revelation, recording, assembling, editing, and document preparation **of the material in the Writings of Moses**.

At the **end of chapter nine** and the **beginning of chapter ten**, Paul discusses the reasons for the failure of the physical nation of Israel and the current state of the Jews:

(30) What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a **righteousness that is by faith**; (31) but that **Israel who pursued a [nomos] that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that [nomos]**. (32) Why? Because they did not pursue it by

³⁰⁴ The Greek word is υιοθεσία - huiothesia, “adoption”, “sonship”, see GEL pages 841-843; “sonship” is preferable to “adoption” because begetting by the Holy Spirit leads to actual birth into the Family of God; see also Romans 8:15,23, Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 1:5.

³⁰⁵ See GEL page 543

faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, (33) as it is written,

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”
(See Isaiah 8:14, 28:16, 49:23, Psalm 118:22, Joel 2:26-27)

(1) Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. (2) For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. (3) For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. (4) For Christ is the [telos] of the [nomos] for righteousness to everyone who believes.
(Romans 9:30 -33, 10:1-4 ESV)

Verse 30, Paul is asserting that Gentile Christians, who have accepted the faith of Jesus Christ, can, thus, be accounted righteous by God. In **verses 31 and 32**, Paul deals with the problem of Israel, specifically the Jews of his time, who sought righteousness “based on works”. By this Paul has in mind the whole problem of the Pharisaic interpretations, the Pharisee’s nomos. The Pharisees taught the people that they had to live scrupulously by all of the Pharisaic precepts – this would make them righteous earning salvation. But of course, the teaching of Jesus Christ, “the stone of stumbling”, was diametrically opposed to this. This is why the Pharisee’s hated Jesus so much, they “stumbled over” Jesus. In **chapter ten verse 2**, Paul acknowledges the zeal of the Pharisees (he had been one prior to conversion³⁰⁶), but they rejected the knowledge of God documented in the Writings of Moses and reiterated in the Gospel of Kingdom by Jesus Christ. **Verse 3** identifies their problem as “self righteousness”.

Verse 4 is frequently used completely out of context, completely misinterpreting it. Some attempt to use this verse to say that Christ made an end of (rendered obsolete) the Teachings of God revealed to Moses, the torah. That is the exact opposite of what Paul meant. The word τέλος - telos has a broad range of meaning including “end”, “outcome”, “goal”.³⁰⁷ Paul uses it here in sense of “goal” or “objective”. He uses *nomos* in the full sense of the Writings of Moses – the revelation which prophesied the Messiah and which contains the Words of Eternal Life, defining the Way of God. Paul says the objective of the Writings of Moses is realized in the life and work of Jesus Christ. This provides the way to righteousness through faith for all who are called by God, believe the Word of God, and live by the Way of God.

In the sixth chapter of Romans, Paul uses telos in exactly the same way:

(20) For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. (21) But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the [telos] of those things is death. (22) But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its [telos], eternal life. (23) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:20-23 ESV)

It would be ludicrous to suggest that Paul is here saying that “sin makes an end of death” while “sanctification” brings an end to “eternal life”. Paul is clearly saying the exact opposite “the end result”, “the goal” of sin is death; “the end result”, “the goal” of sanctification is eternal life.

Paul makes two final uses of *nomos* in **chapter thirteen**. In chapters twelve and thirteen, Paul is dealing with “Christian Living”. Paul summarizes by alluding to the **second Great Commandment**.³⁰⁸

(8) Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the [nomos]. (9) For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”³⁰⁹ (10) Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the [nomos]. (Romans 13:8-10 ESV)

The Ten Commandments define “love”. Paul uses *nomos* specifically with reference to the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are the essence of the Way of God – they are summarized by “love to God” and “love to neighbour”. To “love”, one must live by the Ten Commandments.

³⁰⁶ See Philippians 3:4-5, Acts 23:6, 26:5

³⁰⁷ See GEL pages 818-820

³⁰⁸ See Mark 12:28-34, Matthew 22:34-40

³⁰⁹ See Leviticus 19:18b

Paul clearly recognized the complexity of the word “nomos”. He frequently makes word plays and devises new meanings. But in the end, he comes down solidly referring to the teaching of God contained in **the Writings of Moses as the Words of Life, the definition of the Way of God**. His condemnation of contemporary philosophers in chapter one verses eighteen through thirty-two, screams loudly at those modern critics who would attempt to use the Book of Romans to substantiate their theories of obsoleting the Writings of Moses.

11.6.2 The Epistle to the Galatians

Paul’s first missionary journey in 46-47AD took him to Southern Galatia, in modern day central Turkey. The Book of Acts records that Paul and Barnabas established church congregations in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe³¹⁰ – from these, other congregations were probably established. A couple of years later, in his second missionary journey, Paul returned to visit these congregations.

Soon after the first journey, “false teachers” visited the area and troubled the new converts.³¹¹ Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians to counteract the influence of the “false teachers”. **The main tenet of the “false teachers” was that to be a “Christian”, one had to be a “Jew”,** which required circumcision and adherence to all the “Pharisaic interpretations”, which they considered of equal or greater weight than the actual teaching of Moses. The Pharisees taught that only through scrupulous adherence to their interpretations could a person become “righteous” and thus “earn salvation”. **Paul makes many references to “nomos” in his refutation of their position.**

In **chapter two**, Paul begins by establishing his position that **salvation is only available by grace through faith**:

(15) We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; (16) yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the [nomos] but **through faith [of] Jesus Christ**, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, **in order to be justified by faith [of] Christ and not by works** of the [nomos], because by works of the [nomos] no one will be justified.

(17) But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! (18) For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

(19) For through the [nomos] I died to the [nomos], so that I might **live to God**. (20) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (21) **I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the [nomos], then Christ died for no purpose.** (Galatians 2:15-21 ESV)

In **verse 15**, Paul identifies himself with the “false teachers” as a fellow “Jew”. Paul goes on in **verse 16** to establish that through conversion, although he is a Jew, he understands that salvation is only available through **“faith of Jesus Christ”**, not through any “works”. **Paul uses “nomos” in its most general sense**: neither Pharisaic interpretations, nor sacrifices, nor living by the Way of God, nor perfect “Christian works”, nor anything else a person does, can earn salvation.

In **verse 17**, Paul reassures the Galatians that any failings on his part do NOT reflect back on Jesus. In **verse 18**, Paul asserts that to accept the teaching of the “false teachers” in any way, would be a great transgression.

Verse 19 is a **definition of conversion**: sin, as defined by the Writings of Moses, requires death; Christian Baptism satisfies that requirement³¹² and allows one to **“live to God”**. **Verse 20** restates verse nineteen unequivocally. **Verse 21** states the fallacy of the position of the “false teachers” – **grace is only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ**; it cannot be attained through any *nomos*.

In **chapter three**, Paul begins by appealing to **simple logic**; again, Paul uses “nomos” in its most general sense:

(2) Let me ask you only this: **Did you receive the Spirit** by works of the [nomos] or by hearing with faith? (3) Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, **are you now being perfected by the flesh?** (4) Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? (5) Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the [nomos], or by hearing with faith ... (Galatians 3:2-5 ESV)

³¹⁰ See Acts 13:13-52, 14:1-28

³¹¹ The identity of these “false teachers” is discussed in section **11.1 False Teachers in Galatia** in the paper “**True Worship of the True God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

³¹² See Romans 6:4

Verse 2, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is only available through faith. **Verse 3, no physical “works” can supersede faith.** **Verse 5, God works through the Holy Spirit** with those who have faith, not those who trust in works.

Next, **Paul gets very specific, even “technical”:**

(10) For **all who rely on works of the [nomos] are under a curse**; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the [nomos], and do them.”³¹³ (11) Now it is evident that **no one is justified before God by the [nomos]**, for **“The righteous shall live by faith.”**³¹⁴ (12) **But the [nomos] is not of faith**, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”³¹⁵ (13) **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the [nomos] by becoming a curse for us**—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged upon a tree”³¹⁶ ... (Galatians 3:10-13 ESV)

In this section, **Paul uses *nomos* specifically for the Writings of Moses**, which he alludes to four times. **Verse 10** makes it clear that **trust in any works is futile** – even to live perfectly by the Way of God cannot earn salvation; and in fact, it is impossible for a human being to live perfectly. **Verse 11** makes it clear that **“righteousness” is only available through faith**, not works. **Verse 12, the Writings of Moses specify the Way of God** – how True Worshipers are to live, but **faith is required to understand the Way of God**; and, faith is required to properly live by the Way of God: rote understanding of prescriptions and proscriptions is NOT good enough. **Verse 13, the curse of the *nomos* is death**, which all human beings have earned by sinning. **Christ’s sacrifice makes it possible, by grace through faith, to have the death penalty removed.**

To reiterate his point, **Paul uses the example of the “promises” to Abraham:**

(15) To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. (16) Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, **“And to offsprings,” referring to many**, but referring to one, **“And to your offspring,” who is Christ.** (17) This is what I mean: the [nomos], which came **430 years afterward**, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as **to make the promise void**. (18) For if **the inheritance** comes by the [nomos], it no longer comes by promise; but **God gave it to Abraham by a promise.** (19) **Why then the [nomos]? It was added because of transgressions**, until **the offspring** should come to whom the promise had been made ... (21) **Is the [nomos] then contrary to the promises** of God? Certainly not! For if a [nomos] had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the [nomos]. (22) But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that **the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.** (Galatians 3:15-19a, 21-22 ESV)

In **verses 15 and 16**, Paul highlights the Messianic nature of the promises to Abraham.³¹⁷ God made the promises into a “covenant”,³¹⁸ binding himself to fulfill them. In **verses 17 and 18**, Paul asserts that the teaching given in conjunction with the Sinai Covenant, **“430 years afterward”**, does not alter the validity of the covenant with Abraham or the delivery of the promises by God.

In **verse 19** Paul explains that the “*nomos*” defines sin, **“added because of transgressions”**, looking to the First Advent, **“the offspring”**, when removal of the penalty for sin became possible. **Verse 21** explains that **there is no contradiction between the “*nomos*” and the “promises”** – both are necessary. **Verse 22** explains that there was no escape from the penalty of sin until Christ came.

Finally, Paul summarizes his argument:

(23) Now before faith came, we were held captive **under the [nomos]**, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. (24) So then, **[nomos] was our guardian until Christ came**, in order that we might be justified by faith. (25) But now that **faith has come**, we are no longer under a guardian, (26) for **in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God**, through faith. (Galatians 3:23-25 ESV)

Verse 23, to be “**under the *nomos***” is to be **under the penalty of death**, which all human beings have earned through sin. **Verse 24**, the “**prison guard**” allows no escape from death: sin defined by the teaching of Moses inexorably requires death. **Only by Jesus’ sacrifice can the death penalty be removed.** **Verses 25 and 26**, the faith of Christ releases Christians from the death penalty.

³¹³ See Deuteronomy 27:26

³¹⁴ See Habakkuk 2:4

³¹⁵ See Leviticus 18:5

³¹⁶ See Deuteronomy 21:23

³¹⁷ See the discussion of this in section [11.2 Abraham and the Promises of God](#).

³¹⁸ See Genesis 15:18

In **chapter four**, Paul points out that it is **totally illogical** for the Galatians, many, or most of whom, were formerly pagans, to now want **to “become Jews” and submit to the Pharisaic constraints** of the “false teachers”:

(3) In the same way **we also**, when we were children, were **enslaved to the elementary principles of the world**. (4) But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, **born under the [nomos]**, (5) to **redeem those who were under the [nomos]**, so that we might receive adoption³¹⁹ as sons.

(8) Formerly, when you did not know God, **you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods**.

(21) Tell me, **you who desire to be under the [nomos], do you not listen to the [nomos]**?

(Galatians 4:3-5, 8, 21 ESV)

In **verse 3** Paul includes himself as having been **“enslaved to the elementary principles of the world”**, because “Pharisaic philosophy” is no different from any other “worldly philosophy” – it is from Satan. **Verse 4**, Christ was **“born under the *nomos*”** because his sacrifice had not yet been made, so no one, including his mother, could yet be delivered from the death penalty. In **verse 5**, Paul is explicit that Jesus purpose was to redeem sinners, those **“under the penalty of the *nomos*”**, both Jews and Greeks.³²⁰ In **verse 8** Paul again alludes to the former paganism of the Galatians. In **verse 21** Paul alludes to the objective of the “false teachers” making a play on the word **“*nomos*”**. The “false teachers” want to draw the Galatians into slavery to sin by their **“*nomos* – Pharisaic interpretations”**. Paul rhetorically asks, **“listen to the *nomos*”**, “listen to the teaching of God”, – **do you want to return to the death penalty?**

In **chapter five**, Paul is very blunt about **the effect of the teaching of the “false teachers”**:

(2) Look: I, Paul, say to you that **if you accept circumcision**, Christ will be of no advantage to you.

(3) I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that **he is obligated to keep the whole [nomos]**.

(4) **You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the [nomos]; you have fallen away from grace**. (Galatians 5:2-4 ESV)

In **verse 2** to **“accept circumcision”** is to **become a “Jew”** which would obviate the sacrifice of Christ. **Verse 3**, as a Jew, all of the **Pharisaic interpretations** are binding, **“the whole *nomos*”**. In **verse 4** Paul is explicit, that **to become a “Jew”, to seek justification by “works”, “by the *nomos*”**, is to fall away from grace, to be cut off from Christ, **to go back to being under the penalty of death**.

Paul then goes on to enjoin **proper Christian living** on the Galatians:

(13) For **you were called to freedom**, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another**. (14) For the whole [nomos] is fulfilled in one word: **“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”**³²¹ ... (16) But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ... (18) But if you are **led by the Spirit**, you are not under the [nomos]. ... (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control; **against such things there is no [nomos]**. (Galatians 5:13-14, 16, 18, 22-23 ESV)

Verses 13 and 14, allude to Jesus’ words reported by Matthew:

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your [being] and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: **You shall love your neighbor as yourself**. On these two commandments depend all the [nomos] and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40 ESV see also Mark 12:28-31, Luke 10:25-28)

Love to God is defined by the first four of the Ten Commandments; love to neighbour, by the last six. The Ten Commandments summarize the Way of God, the *torah*. The rest of the Bible is explanation and elaboration. In Galatians chapter five, **verse 16**, to **“walk in the Spirit”** is to live by the Way of God. **Verse 18**, to be **“led by the Spirit”** is to be under grace, not under the death penalty. **Verses 22 and 23** define the result of being led by the Spirit, **“against such there is no *nomos*”** – Paul uses *nomos* here in the sense of a rule or proscription.

In **chapter six**, Paul has two concluding thoughts:

(2) **Bear one another’s burdens**, and so fulfill the [nomos] of Christ.

(13) For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the [nomos], but **they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast** in your flesh.

³¹⁹ See footnote 304

³²⁰ See Galatians 3:28

³²¹ See Leviticus 19:18b

Verse two reiterates proper Christian living. **Verse thirteen** is a final warning against the hypocrisy of the Pharisaic “false teachers.”

Galatians is Paul’s earliest letter. It was written before the Jerusalem Council, which officially ruled that Christians do NOT have to become “Jews”. Prior to his conversion, Paul was a Pharisee. He was well educated on the Old Testament and was intimately familiar with the Pharisaic interpretations. This background gave him the understanding to recognize **the fallacy of a Christian accepting Christ’s sacrifice and then trusting in salvation by works.** Paul’s early formulation, in the Epistle to the Galatians, of **the relationship between faith and works** is fundamental to all his teaching. It is in fact, **fundamental to all Christian faith.** Paul clearly elucidates the **Way of God based on the Writings of Moses** as a prerequisite of salvation by grace through faith:

For **by grace you [are being] saved through faith.** And this is not your own doing; it is **the gift of God, not a result of works,** so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works,** which God prepared beforehand, that **we should walk in them.** (Ephesians 2:8-10 ESV)

12. The Words of Eternal Life

Jesus Christ, as YHWH, spoke personally to Moses. Moses recorded his words, and we have that record in the Writings of Moses. The entire corpus was assembled under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Just before his ascension, speaking to two of the disciples, **Jesus goes right back to the Writings of Moses as a witness to his life and work:**

And he said to them, **“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe** all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And **beginning with Moses** and all the Prophets, **he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.** (Luke 24:25-27 ESV)

Later, **speaking to the Twelve,** he similarly points them back to **the Writings of Moses as the basis for their witness to his life and work:**

“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that **everything written about me in the [nomos] of Moses** and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” **Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures** and said to them, **“Thus it is written,** that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that **repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.** **You are witnesses** of these things. ...” (Luke 24:44-48 ESV)

Jesus’ teaching that he enjoined on the Apostles to take to “all nations” was the message of the Writings of Moses. The Writings of Moses are the “words of eternal life”. Earlier during his ministry, in the synagogue in Capernaum, **Jesus publicly explained the purpose of his coming:**

“... For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. ...” Jesus said to them, **“I am the bread of life;** whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. ... I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And **the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.**” (John 6:33, 35, 51 ESV)

Not only **the people in the synagogue had trouble with Jesus’ teaching,** but also some of the disciples: When **many of his disciples** heard it, they said, **“This is a hard saying;** who can listen to it?” But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, **“Do you take offense** at this? ...” After this **many of his disciples turned back** and no longer walked with him. (John 6:60-61, 66 ESV)

Jesus then looked to the Twelve:

So Jesus said to the twelve, **“Do you want to go away as well?”** Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? **You have the words of eternal life,** and we have believed, and have come to know, that **you are the Holy One of God.**” (John 6:67-69 ESV)

Jesus, as YHWH, spoke the words which recreated the surface of the earth³²² to be a home for the human race. He spoke the words which created Adam and Eve.³²³ Jesus, as YHWH, spoke to Abraham the words which contain the promises upon which the whole plan of God is being carried out. Jesus, as YHWH, spoke to Moses the **teaching that defines the Way of God – the words of eternal life.** Moses has faithfully reported Jesus’ words. Moses masterfully explained and elaborated Jesus’ words in his

³²² See Genesis 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24

³²³ See Genesis 1:26

speeches as recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy. Jesus through the Holy Spirit spoke to **David and the Prophets** who have faithfully recorded the words which further help us understand the words of eternal life. Finally, the **New Testament authors** have recorded the words of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, that he spoke on earth, **the words of eternal life**:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, **God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son**, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (Hebrews 1:1-2 ESV)

Jesus own words as reported by the Apostle Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount **are unequivocal on Jesus' position with regard to the Writings of Moses**:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the [nomos] or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the [nomos] until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but **whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**

(Matthew 5:17-19 ESV)

The word “fulfill” is from πληρώ - plēroō, a word with a very broad range of meaning.³²⁴ **Jesus uses the word in “prophetic” sense** – his life and work are the objective of much of the prophecy in the Writings of Moses and the Old Testament in general. The First Advent fulfilled many of these prophecies, but there are many yet to be fulfilled by the Second Advent and subsequent to it. Jesus affirms these prophecies are also sure – unless **“heaven and earth should pass away”**. Jesus then affirms that **those to whom knowledge of the Way of God has been given**, must live by it and must be faithful to teach it.

When **Paul first arrived in Rome as prisoner**, as his custom was, he first made contact with the Jewish community. They at first listened to his teaching, but in the end the Jewish community rejected the Messiahship of Jesus Christ. **Paul then focused his teaching on the general population**, “the Gentiles”:

And when **we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself**, with the soldier who guarded him. After three days **he called together the local leaders of the Jews**, and when they had gathered, he said to them, “Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ...”

When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, **testifying to the kingdom of God** and trying **to convince them about Jesus both from the [nomos] of Moses** and from the Prophets. And **some were convinced** by what he said, but **others disbelieved**. And disagreeing among themselves, they departed ...

“... Therefore let it be known to you that **this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles**; they will listen.” He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and **welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ** with all boldness and without hindrance. (Acts 28:16-17, 23-25a, 28, 30-31 ESV)

About five years earlier, Paul had made contact with Church congregation in Rome through the Epistle to the Romans. As discussed in section **11.6.1 The Book of Romans**, **Paul's teaching was rooted in the Writings of Moses**. His time in Rome no doubt put him close contact with the members of the Church in Rome. His teaching from his prison-home would certainly have added many people to the Church.

The Writings of Moses contain the greatest outpouring of revelation from the Creator God to human beings. They enjoin complete confidence on human beings to trust God. God's salvific acts as recorded in the Bible are witness to God's trustworthiness. The teaching of the Bible from start to finish is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit. **Those called by God, to whom the understanding is revealed by the Holy Spirit, can have absolute trust in the words of God.**

The revelation of God, contained in the Bible, is the complete, consistent, correct, and inviolable set of instructions from the Creator to his most important creation, human beings. The Bible contains the words of eternal life. The Writings of Moses contain the essence of all the teaching of the Bible. The history of Israel provides many object lessons derived from the Writings of Moses. The Wisdom Literature elucidates many of the finer points of the teaching. The Prophets provide insight into God's Nature and the Plan of God. The New Testament provides a filter through which all the teaching can be brought into focus. **The basis of all the teaching of God is the Writings of Moses.**

³²⁴ See GEL pages 676-678
Wednesday, May 22, 2024

Excursus 1 – Revelation, Inspiration, and Authority

The Bible is authoritative because it is the inspired, revealed, teaching of the Creator God.³²⁵ The Bible is the **instruction book** that the Creator has provided to and for his most important creation – human beings. From the beginning, God has communicated with human beings **to teach us what we need to know to please and serve him.**

In the Garden of Eden, God walked with Adam and Eve and taught them directly:

So **God created man in his own image**, in the image of God he created him;

male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. **And God said to them ...**

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

And the LORD God commanded the man saying ...

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day ...

But **the LORD God called to the man** and said to him, “Where are you?”

(Genesis 1:27-28a, 2:15-16a, 3:8a, 9 ESV)

God also spoke directly with Cain, Noah, and Noah’s sons.³²⁶ There is no record of how God communicated with the **“righteous line”** from Shem through Terah,³²⁷ but again with Abram, God spoke to him directly:

Now **the LORD said to Abram**, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ... Then **the LORD appeared to Abram and said**, “To your offspring I will give this land.” (Genesis 12:1, 7a ESV)

With Abram, God also used the technique of **“visionary experience”** to communicate:

After these things **the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision** ... And **he said to him**, “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” ... As the sun was going down, a **deep sleep fell on Abram**. And behold, **dreadful and great darkness fell upon him**. Then the **LORD said to Abram** ... (Genesis 15:1a, 7, 12-13a ESV)

Later YHWH, **in manifest human form**, appeared to Abraham and communicated with him:

And **the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre**, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, **three men were standing in front of him**. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, **“O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight**, do not pass by your servant. ... **The LORD said**, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do ...” (Genesis 18:1-3, 17 ESV)

Similarly, God also spoke directly with **Isaac**.³²⁸ With **Jacob**, God first revealed himself in **a dream**:

Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night ... **And he dreamed**, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, **the LORD stood above it and said**, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. ...” (Genesis 28:10-11a, 12-13a ESV see also Genesis 46:2-4)

Later Jacob had a **physical encounter** with YHWH in manifest human form:

And Jacob was left alone. And **a man wrestled with him** until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. **Then he said**, “Let me go, for the day has broken.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” **And he said to him**, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” Then he said, **“Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God** and with men, and have prevailed.” Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” **And there he blessed him**. (Genesis 32:24-29 ESV)

There is no record of **Joseph** receiving any direct revelation from God, but clearly God was working with him **through the Holy Spirit**:

The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the LORD was with him and that **the LORD caused all that he did to succeed** in his hands. (Genesis 39:2-3 ESV)

³²⁵ For a very thorough and excellent treatment of this topic see Warfield; see also Freeman pages 51-100, Payne pages 3-16.

³²⁶ See Genesis 4:6-7, 9-15, 6:13-21, 7:1-4, 8:15-17, 9:1-7, 8-17

³²⁷ See Genesis 11:10-26

³²⁸ See Genesis 26:2-5, 24

These examples show the main ways that God has used to reveal knowledge to human beings:

- Direct speech
- Visionary experience
- Manifestation in human form
- Dreams
- Physical encounter
- Through the Holy Spirit

With Moses, God first used a supernatural phenomenon to precipitate a physical encounter; then God spoke directly to Moses:

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the [manifestation]³²⁹ of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:1-6 ESV)

After this, God spoke directly with Moses, in fact, God makes a point of his direct communication with Moses in contrast to promised later prophets:

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen ... I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18 ESV)

And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD. (Numbers 12:6-8a ESV)

With the prophets, God did use visionary experiences on many occasions.³³⁰ However, the prophets also heard the direct voice of God:

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." And he said, "Go, and say to this people ..." (Isaiah 6:8-9a ESV)

The word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, 'Thus says the LORD ...'" (Jeremiah 2:1-2a ESV)

And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking. ... And he said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you." And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. (Ezekiel 1:28bβ, 2:1-2 ESV)

The ultimate revelation from God to humanity came through the words of Jesus Christ, who was known as YHWH in the Old Testament:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (Hebrews 1:1-2 ESV)

Jesus is explicit in his endorsement of the Old Testament:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the [nomos] or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the [nomos] until all is accomplished. (Matthew 5:17-18 ESV)

So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the [nomos] and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:12 ESV)

But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the [nomos] to become void. ... He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.' (Luke 16:17, 31 ESV)

³²⁹ See the Old Testament Bible Study Notes "The Angel of YHWH" on <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

³³⁰ See, for example, Isaiah 6:1-7, Jeremiah 1:4-14, Ezekiel 1:4-28, 2:8-10, 3:1-3

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. ... Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the [nomos] of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures ... (Luke 24:27, 44-45a ESV)

The Apostle Paul, who was taught directly by Jesus Christ after the Ascension, recorded the seminal scripture on the inspiration of the Old Testament:

... from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:15-17 ESV)

The Greek word θεόπνευστος - theopneustos, “breathed out by God” is only used in this verse. It is an attempt by Paul to make very graphic what is meant by “inspiration”. When Paul wrote, only the Old Testament existed – by “scripture” Paul can only mean the Old Testament. As the New Testament documents, including Paul’s letters, were written, and circulated, they also became recognized as “scripture”:

Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. (2 Peter 3:14-16 ESV)

Down through history, God has revealed himself to those people whom he was calling at any given time. From creation until the end of the first century, God has seen to it that certain of his words were recorded and passed down for succeeding generations. Today we have God’s complete revelation in the scriptures of the Old Testament and the scriptures of the New Testament:

Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. (1 Corinthians 10:11 ESV)

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4 ESV)

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when [it] predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:10-12 ESV)

This is the miracle of the Bible: God has inspired men over thousands of years to record his teaching and his salvific acts, and it has been preserved for our benefit at the end of the age. The Bible is consistent from start to finish. The Bible is the complete revelation from God to be used by those called by God to understand the will of God. Today God works with those whom he calls through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to understand the revelation contained in the Bible:

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, [which] the world cannot receive, because it neither sees [it] nor knows [it]. You know [it], for [it] dwells with you and will be in you. ... These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, [which] the Father will send in my name, [it] will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:15-17, 25-26 ESV)

Excurses 2 – Jethro, the Priest of Midian

Abraham had many sons through his concubines.³³¹ Those through Keturah are named because she was apparently raised to the status of “wife” after the death of Sarah:

The sons of Keturah, Abraham’s concubine (pilegash): she bore Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. (1 Chronicles 1:32 ESV)

Abraham took another wife (‘ishshah), whose name was Keturah. She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

But **to the sons of his concubines (pilegish)** Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living **he sent them away** from his son Isaac, eastward **to the east country**. (Genesis 25:1-2, 6 ESV)

The reference to “**Midian**” is significant because **Jethro/Reuel**, the father of Moses’ second wife Zipporah is said to be a “**priest of Midian**”. There is no information on the line of descent from “Midian ben Abraham” to “Jethro/Reuel”. At the time of Moses, the group of Midianites of which Jethro/Reuel was a member lived in the area east of the body of water we call the “Gulf of Aqaba”. This is where Moses fled from Egypt:

But **Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian**. And he sat down by a well. Now the **priest of Midian** had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock. The shepherds came and drove them away, but **Moses stood up and saved them**, and watered their flock.

When they came home to their father **Reuel**, he said, “How is it that you have come home so soon today?” They said, “**An Egyptian delivered us** out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock.” He said to his daughters, “Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread.”

And **Moses was content to dwell with the man**, and **he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah**. (Exodus 2:15b-21 ESV)

Moses spent some forty years in the land of Midian tending the flocks of Jethro/Reuel. He had two sons from Zipporah. Then YHWH appeared to him in the “burning bush”:

Now **Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian**, and he led his flock to the [far]³³² side of the wilderness and came to **Horeb**, the mountain of God. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. (Exodus 3:1-2a ESV)

Moses respectfully withdrew his services from Jethro/Reuel and went back to Egypt as YHWH instructed him. **Moses originally took Zipporah and his sons with him**, but later sent them back to Jethro/Reuel:

Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, “**Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt** to see whether they are still alive.” And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.” And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.” So **Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey**, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand. (Exodus 4:18-20 ESV)

After the Exodus event, when **the Israelites were back in the land of Midian**, in the area of Horeb, Jethro/Reuel returned to Moses with Moses’ wife and sons:

Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses’ father-in-law, **heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel** his people, how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. Now Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses’ wife, after he had sent her home, along with her two sons. ... **Jethro**, Moses’ father-in-law, **came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was encamped at the mountain of God**.

Jethro said, “**Blessed be the LORD**, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. **Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods**, because in this affair they dealt arrogantly with the people.” And **Jethro**, Moses’ father-in-law, **brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God**; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses’ father-in-law before God. (Exodus 18:1-3a, 5, 10-12 ESV)

From this it is possible to deduce that, while **Jethro/Reuel was NOT a True Worshipper of YHWH**, he was at least **aware of YHWH and the heritage of his predecessors going back to Abraham**. Next, the narrative of Exodus records an explicit example of **Jethro/Reuel providing useful information to Moses**:

The next day **Moses sat to judge the people**, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. When **Moses’ father-in-law** saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, “What is this that you are doing for the people? ... **What you are doing is not good**. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. Now **obey my voice; I will give you advice**, and God be with you! ... look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people ...”

So **Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said**. (Exodus 18:13-14a, 17b-19a, 21a, 24 ESV)

³³² The Hebrew word is אַחֲרֵי - ‘aḥar, which as a spatial preposition carries a range of meaning including “back”, “behind”, “far”; which can imply “west”, but it does NOT necessarily mean “west”.

As previously noted, Rohl has an interesting suggestion that **Jethro may have been a source of some of the information Moses included in Genesis.**³³³ This is particularly likely for the “**Abraham document**” – the colophon of this document is:

These are the [histories] (toledoth) of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s [slave], bore to Abraham. (Genesis 25:12 ESV)

The **descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Midian were very early on related to each other,** the slave traders to whom Joseph was sold are called both “Ishmaelites” and “Midianites”.³³⁴

And looking up they saw a caravan of **Ishmaelites** coming from Gilead ...

Meanwhile the **Midianites** had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar ... (Genesis 37:25, 36 ESV)

At the demand of Sarah, who owned Hagar, Abraham acquiesced to the manumission of Hagar and the banishment of Hagar and Ishmael to the “wilderness”:

So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to **Hagar**, putting it on her shoulder, **along with the child**, and **sent her away**. And **she departed and wandered in the wilderness** of Beersheba. (Genesis 21:14 ESV)

Presumably also under pressure from Sarah, **Abraham also sent away the sons of his concubines:**

But **to the sons of his concubines (pilegish)** Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living **he sent them away** from his son Isaac, eastward **to the east country**. (Genesis 25:1-2, 6 ESV)

As Abraham’s firstborn son, it would be natural for Ishmael to retain the official family history. From Ishmael it would have been passed down succeeding generations and could easily have ended up with Jethro/Reuel, who would have passed it on to Moses.

There was more than one group of Midianites. When the Israelites got to the Plains of Moab, a group of Midianites were in cahoots with Moabites to hire Bil’am to curse Israel.³³⁵ This group was destroyed by the Israelites.³³⁶ Still, groups of Midianites continued to oppose Israel during the Judges period.³³⁷

Another group that appears to have become associated with the Midianites of Jethro/Reuel is the Kenites. They appear to have originally one of the indigenous tribes of Canaan.³³⁸ Moses tried to convince his brother-in-law, Hobab, to function as a guide on the journey from Horeb. He at first refused but appears to have actually joined the Israelites:

And **Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel** the Midianite, Moses’ father-in-law, “We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, ‘I will give it to you.’ **Come with us, and we will do good to you**, for the LORD has promised good to Israel.” But he said to him, “I will not go. I will depart to my own land and to my kindred.” And he said, “Please do not leave us, for **you know where we should camp in the wilderness**, and **you will serve as eyes for us**. And if you do go with us, whatever good the LORD will do to us, the same will we do to you.” (Numbers 10:29-32 ESV)

The “Kenites” are later said to be related to Hobab, and to have settled in the wilderness area to the west of the Dead Sea:

And **the descendants of the Kenite**, Moses’ [brother-in-law],³³⁹ went up with the people of Judah from the city of palms into **the wilderness of Judah**, which lies in the Negeb near Arad, and they went and **settled with the people**.

Now Heber **the Kenite**³⁴⁰ had separated from **the Kenites, the descendants of Hobab** the [brother-in-law] of Moses ... (Judges 1:16, 4:11a ESV)

The Kenites west of Dead Sea remained allied to Israel and were probably ultimately absorbed into the Southern Kingdom.³⁴¹ The thread of Abraham’s descendants through Midian to Jethro/Reuel and their relationship to the Kenites, has no clearly stated purpose in the Bible. The incident of Jethro/Reuel

³³³ See Rohl EE pages 188-189,

³³⁴ See also Judges 8:24-26

³³⁵ See Numbers 22:1-7

³³⁶ See Numbers 31:1-17

³³⁷ See Judges chapters 6, 7, and 8

³³⁸ See Genesis 15:19, Numbers 24:21

³³⁹ The Hebrew word is הֹתֵן - hothan, most commonly “father-in-law”, but the root הָתַן - hathan carries the range of meaning “related by marriage” (Holladay page 120); clearly this should be “brother-in-law”.

³⁴⁰ These Kenites were favourable to Israel, see Judges 4:17, 5:24

³⁴¹ See 1 Samuel 15:6, 27:10, 30:29, 1 Chronicles 2:55

advising Moses on judicial organization is the most detailed information in the thread. This incident does raise the possibility that Jethro/Reuel was a source of other information for Moses.

Excursus 3 – The Elders of Israel

The **family of Jacob entered Egypt as a small group** of people with **the promise of YHWH that he would make them into “a great nation”**:

So **Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba**, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And **God spoke to Israel in visions of the night** and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.” Then he said, “**I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph’s hand shall close your eyes.**”

Then **Jacob set out from Beersheba**. The sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him. They also took their livestock and their goods, which they had gained in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, **Jacob and all his offspring with him**, his sons, and his sons’ sons with him, his daughters, and his sons’ daughters. All his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.

All the persons belonging to Jacob who came into Egypt, who were his own descendants, **not including Jacob’s sons’ wives**, were sixty-six persons in all. And the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two. **All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy.**³⁴²
(Genesis 46:1-7, 26-27 ESV)

About **ten years before this**, Joseph had been appointed Vizier, second in command to Pharaoh, to lead Egypt through the years of plenty and famine.³⁴³ Joseph was eminently successful and became very well respected in Egypt.³⁴⁴ For two generations, under Joseph’s beneficence, the Israelites greatly prospered and increased:

Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And **they gained possessions** in it, and **were fruitful** and **multiplied greatly**. (Genesis 47:27 ESV)

For at least another generation or two, **the influence of Joseph was strong**, and the Israelites continued to prosper and increase. **Eventually a new line of Pharaohs was established who did not recognize the accomplishments of Joseph**. Slowly, the lot of the Israelites changed until they were forced into slavery. But even in slavery, the Israelites increased:

Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But **the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied** and **grew exceedingly strong**, so that **the land was filled with them**.

Now there arose a **new king over Egypt**, who **did not know Joseph**. And he said to his people, “Behold, **the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us**. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.”

Therefore they **set taskmasters over them to afflict them** with heavy burdens. ... But **the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied** and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. So **they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves** and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves. (Exodus 1:6-14 ESV)

This is the situation into which Moses was born. At about age forty, he fled to Midian and lived there about forty years. These were probably the worst years of the Israelites’ slavery. Then at the command of YHWH, **Moses returned to Egypt with a mandate to free the Israelites. Moses is instructed to work with group called “the elders of Israel”**:

Go and gather the elders (zaken) of Israel together and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, “I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites ... a land flowing with milk and honey.”’

And **they will listen to your voice**, and **you and the elders (zaken) of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt** and say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’ (Exodus 3:16-18 ESV)

³⁴² 66 (male descendants) + 3 (Joseph and sons) + 1 (Jacob) = 70 (persons)

³⁴³ See Genesis 41:37-57

³⁴⁴ See Genesis 47:20-26

Who were “the elders of Israel”? How did this “**leadership group**” come into existence? What was the **scope of its authority**? As the generation of the eponymous patriarchs of the nation of Israel died out, the group, “the elders of Israel”, would have naturally grown out of oldest surviving sons. We have no information on the process whereby this occurred. Similar groups were common among other nations in the ancient world.³⁴⁵ **The model for Israel was most likely set by Egypt:**

So Joseph went up to bury his father. With him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, **the elders (zaqen) of his household**, and **all the elders (zaqen) of the land of Egypt**, as well as all the household of Joseph, his brothers, and his father’s household. (Genesis 50:7-8a ESV)

The term “elders” is from the Hebrew word זָקֵן - zaqen. The verbal root carries the range of meaning “to be old” or “to become old”³⁴⁶ – “used either as an attributive adjective or as a substantive, [zaqen] describes the person (male or female) who, contrasting with the youth (*na’ar*) has reached the stage in life called old age. ... **as a substantive**, usually plural, [zaqen] is **a technical term**. ... Only the context can determine whether old men or **the ruling body** is intended in any particular case.”³⁴⁷

Moses and Aaron did as YHWH instructed and worked with “the elders of Israel” as the representatives of the people:

Then **Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders (zaqen) of the people of Israel**. Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs **in the sight of the people**. And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited **the people of Israel** and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.

Then **Moses called all the elders of Israel (zaqen)** and said to them, “Go and select lambs for yourselves **according to your clans**, and kill the Passover lamb. ...” (Exodus 4:29-31, 12:21 ESV)

On the journey to Horeb and at Horeb, Moses explicitly dealt with the “elders of Israel”.³⁴⁸ The Sinai Covenant was explicitly presented to the “elders of Israel” who were then responsible to present it to “all the people”:

These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel. So **Moses came and called the elders (zaqen)** of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. **All the people answered** together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD. (Exodus 19:6b-8 ESV)³⁴⁹

The “elders of Israel” played a prominent role in the covenant ratification ceremony.³⁵⁰ The “elders of Israel” were given specific roles in the sacrifices prescribed at Mount Sinai.³⁵¹ When the Israelites set out from Horeb to go to the Promised Land, the people immediately complained; Moses became discouraged, so **YHWH provided assistance by distributing the Holy Spirit to a group of the “elders of Israel”**:

And **the people complained** in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes ... **Moses said** to the LORD, “**Why have you dealt ill with your servant?** And why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? ... If you will treat me like this, **kill me at once**, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness.”

Then **the LORD said to Moses**, “**Gather for me seventy men of the elders (zaqen) of Israel**, whom you know to be **the elders (zaqen) of the people** and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. ...”

So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And **he gathered seventy men of the elders (zaqen) of the people** and placed them around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of **the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders (zaqen)**. (Numbers 11:1a, 11, 15, 16, 24-25a ESV)

In the Plains of Moab, in his final speeches to the people, Moses anticipates a significant role for the “elders of Israel” in establishing a functioning community in the Promised Land.³⁵² The narrator of the

³⁴⁵ See Numbers 22:4,7, Joshua 9:11

³⁴⁶ See **TWOT** article 574 pages 249-250

³⁴⁷ Lewis, J.P., *ibid.*, page 249

³⁴⁸ See Exodus 17:5-6, 18:12

³⁴⁹ See also Deuteronomy 5:23-27

³⁵⁰ See Exodus 24:1,9,14

³⁵¹ See Leviticus 4:15, 9:1

³⁵² See Deuteronomy 19:12, 21:2-4,6,19-20, 22:15-18, 25:7-9

Book of Deuteronomy is explicit that **Moses used the “elders of Israel” to deliver the contents of his speeches to the people:**

Now **Moses and the elders (zagen) of Israel commanded the people**, saying, “Keep the whole commandment that I command you today. ...” (Deuteronomy 27:1 ESV)

The **Covenant of Life** explicitly identifies the “elders of Israel” as a participant.³⁵³ Moses specifically charged the “elders of Israel”, along with the Levitical Priests, with the task of **maintaining and publicly reading the documentation** he had produced.³⁵⁴ Just before Moses’ death, **YHWH prescribed a song of prophecy and warning**; then, **Moses assembled the “elders of Israel” to warn them**, as prescribed in the song³⁵⁵ (the Song of Moses is recorded in Deuteronomy chapter thirty-two):

And **the LORD said to Moses**, “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them. ... Now therefore **write this song and teach it to the people of Israel**. Put it in their mouths, that **this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel**. ...”

“... **Assemble to me all the elders (zagen) of your tribes** and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears and **call heaven and earth to witness against them**. For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands.” (Deuteronomy 31:16, 19, 28-29 ESV)

During the conquest, Joshua continued to work through “the elders of Israel” following the example set by Moses and Aaron.³⁵⁶ The provision for **“cities of refuge”** was first promised in the Covenant Code.³⁵⁷ When the Israelites got the Plains of Moab, Moses allocated three cities east of the Jordan River and prescribed at least three more once the Israelites had crossed to the west.³⁵⁸ Moses prescribed a role for **the “elders” of the offender’s city** in determining eligibility for refuge:

But if anyone hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and attacks him and strikes him fatally so that he dies, and he flees into one of these cities, then **the elders (zagen) of his city shall send and take him from there**, and hand him over to the avenger of blood, so that he may die. Your eye shall not pity him, but **you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from Israel**, so that it may be well with you. (Deuteronomy 19:11-13 ESV)

Joshua established the three cities west of the Jordan River,³⁵⁹ and specified **the role of the “elders” in the cities of refuge**:

... the manslayer who strikes any person without intent or unknowingly may flee there. They shall be for you a refuge from the avenger of blood. **He shall flee to one of these cities and shall stand at the entrance of the gate** of the city and **explain his case to the elders (zagen) of that city**. Then they shall take him into the city and give him a place, and he shall remain with them. (Joshua 20:3-4 ESV)

The “elders” who knew Joshua are credited with preserving the true worship of YHWH after the death of Joshua.³⁶⁰ **Gideon** holds the “elders” of the city of Succoth responsible for the actions of the city.³⁶¹ The **“elders of Gilead”** took the initiative to enlist Jephthah as leader to fight the Ammonites.³⁶² **Boaz** is careful to present his case before the **“elders of the city”** before he performs the Levirate function for Mahlon with Ruth.³⁶³ The “elders of Israel” made the decision to bring the **Ark of the Covenant** to the Battle of Ebenezer where the Philistines captured it.³⁶⁴

The **“elders of Israel”** are the ones to **request Samuel to appoint a king**:

Then all **the elders (zagen) of Israel** gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, “Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now **appoint for us a king** to judge us like all the nations.” (1 Samuel 8:4-5 ESV)

³⁵³ See Deuteronomy 29:10

³⁵⁴ See Deuteronomy 31:9-13

³⁵⁵ See Deuteronomy 32:7

³⁵⁶ See Joshua 7:6, 8:10,33, 23:2, 24:1

³⁵⁷ See Exodus 21:13

³⁵⁸ See Numbers 35:9-15, Deuteronomy 4:41-43, 19:4-10

³⁵⁹ See Joshua 20:1-9

³⁶⁰ See Joshua 24:31, Judges 2:7

³⁶¹ See Judges 8:4-7,13-16

³⁶² See Judges 11:4-11

³⁶³ See Ruth 4:1-12

³⁶⁴ See 1 Samuel 4:1-4,10-11

David is careful to secure the support of the “elders of Judah” who would elect him king in Hebron:

When **David** came to Ziklag, he **sent part of the spoil to his friends, the elders (zaqen) of Judah**, saying, “Here is a present for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD.” It was for those in ... **Hebron** ... And David brought up his men who were with him, everyone with his household, and they lived in the towns of Hebron. And **the men of Judah came**, and there they **anointed David king over the house of Judah**. (1 Samuel 30:26-27a, 31a, 2 Samuel 2:3-4 ESV)

The “elders of Israel” were instrumental in making David king over all of Israel:

And Abner conferred with **the elders (zaqen) of Israel**, saying, “For some time past **you have been seeking David as king** over you. Now then bring it about ... Then **all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron** and said, “Behold, we are your bone and flesh. In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the LORD said to you, ‘You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.’” So **all the elders (zaqen) of Israel came to the king at Hebron**, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and **they anointed David king over Israel**. (2 Samuel 3:17-18a, 5:1-3 ESV see also 1 Chronicles 11:1-3)

David continued to use the “elders” as an advisory group,³⁶⁵ as did **Solomon**,³⁶⁶ and subsequent **kings of Israel**.³⁶⁷ However, **the “elders” as a group were not above reproach** – they could be manipulated. When **Absalom** conspired against David, the “elders of Israel” quickly threw in their lot with Absalom.³⁶⁸ The **“elders of Jezreel”**, no doubt in fear of **Jezebel**, had no problem committing murder at her command.³⁶⁹ **During Jehu’s purge**, the **“elders of Samaria”**, who had been entrusted to care for the sons of Ahab, weakly obeyed Jehu’s command and executed the sons of Ahab.³⁷⁰ When the final destruction of the nation of Israel had occurred and the vestiges of the people were **in exile in Babylon**, the “elders” continued to function as an organizing body.³⁷¹ When the **return from exile occurred**, the “elders” were prominent in establishing the restored community.³⁷²

In the Septuagint, the word *zaqen* is generally translated by πρεσβύτερος - presbyteros.³⁷³ In the New Testament, *presbyteros* is generally translated as “elder”. In the Synoptic Gospels³⁷⁴ and the first few chapters of Acts, *presbyteros* is used for the “elders of the Jews”, i.e., the direct continuation of the “elders of Israel”. In Acts chapter eleven verse thirty, the word *presbyteros* is used for the first time with reference to a Christian – a person in a position in the Church. The word *presbyteros* is so used ten times in the Book of Acts.³⁷⁵

In the Pastoral Epistles, *presbyteros* is grouped with ἐπίσκοπος - episkopos (masculine noun), ἐπισκοπή - episkopē (feminine noun), and διάκονος - diakonos as the titles or descriptions of offices of service in the Church.³⁷⁶ The word *διάκονος* means “servant”, “minister”, “deacon”: **one entrusted to serve the needs of others**.³⁷⁷ The words *episkopos/episkopē* mean “overseer”.³⁷⁸ **The focus of all these words is “service”** – caring for the Church, caring for the individuals who comprise the Church. **Jesus was clear and specific about “positions” in the Church:**

A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. **But not so with you.** Rather, let **the greatest among you become as the youngest**, and **the leader as one who serves**.

“For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But **I am among you as the one who serves.** ...” (Luke 22:24-27 ESV see also Mark 9:34-37, Matthew 18:1-6)

But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and **you are all brothers**. And call no man your father on earth, for **you have one Father**, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for **you**

³⁶⁵ See 2 Samuel 12:17, 19:11, 1 Chronicles 15:25, 21:16

³⁶⁶ See 1 Kings 8:1,3, 2 Chronicles 5:2,4,

³⁶⁷ See 1 Kings 20:7,8, 2 Kings 23:1-3, 2 Chronicles 34:29

³⁶⁸ See 2 Samuel 17:1-4

³⁶⁹ See 1 Kings 21:8-14

³⁷⁰ See 2 Kings 10:1-7

³⁷¹ See Ezekiel 8:1, 14:1, 20:1-3, Jeremiah 29:1

³⁷² See Ezra 5:5, 6:7-8,14, 10:8-14

³⁷³ See **TDNT** VI pages 651-683

³⁷⁴ The word *presbyteros* does NOT occur in the Gospel of John.

³⁷⁵ See Acts 11:30, 14:23, 15:2,4,6,22,23, 16:4, 20:7, 21:8

³⁷⁶ See 1 Timothy 4:14, 5:17,19, Titus 1:5

³⁷⁷ See ESV Greek Word Detail, GEL pages 183-184; 1 Timothy 3:8,12, 4:6 (ESV: “servant”)

³⁷⁸ See ESV Greek Word Detail, GEL page 299; 1 Timothy 3:1-2, Titus 1:7

have one instructor, the Christ. **The greatest among you shall be your servant**. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:8-12 ESV)

Peter makes the role of the “Elder” or “Overseer” very clear:

So I exhort the elders (presbyteros) among you, as a fellow elder (synpresbyteros) and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: **shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight (episkopeō)**,³⁷⁹ not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but **being examples to the flock**. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders³⁸⁰ (presbyteros). **Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another**, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:1-6 ESV)

For to this you have been called, because **Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example**, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For **you were straying like sheep**, but **have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer [episkopos] of your [lives]**. (1 Peter 2:21-25 ESV)

Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd the True Overseer, the role model of all persons in a position of service. The Christian calling is to “service”. God is preparing Christians today to lead the whole world into living by the Way of God in the World Tomorrow. **This is the ultimate responsibility of “leadership”, to serve.**

Excursus 4 – Statutes and Ancient Law Codes

The verb **הָאָק** - **haqāq** carries a range of meaning including “engrave”, “decree”, “inscribe”, “govern”.³⁸¹ The derived masculine noun, **הֶחָק** - **hoq**, similarly carries a range of meaning including “statute”, “custom”, “law”, “decree”.³⁸² The derived feminine noun, **הֻקָּה** - **huqqah**, carries a similar range of meaning.³⁸³ The verb occurs only three times in the Writings of Moses, each time in a poel participle form with the implication of “governing”.³⁸⁴ The nouns, **hoq** and **huqqah**, are used frequently – the most common translations are “statute” or plural “statutes”. **A dictionary definition of a “statute” is: “a law; decree; a formally established rule”**. In the Writings of Moses, “statutes” cover a broad range of topics including: **proper worship, civil duties, criminal activity, and moral and ethical responsibilities**. For Israel, they were intended to be explicitly adhered to; but, more importantly, they were meant as **examples from which the mind of God could be deduced** in comparable and related situations. **This how they are of value today.**

Statutes in Israel

Some statutes appear to be very “legalistic”. Some of these have very close parallels in various ancient “law codes”. It is instructive to make comparisons. The similarities do suggest that there were in the ancient near east some common ideas of “right” and “wrong”. As with all comparison, differences are far more important than similarities – many of the Biblical “statutes” deal with a range of issues NOT addressed by ancient law codes. The “statutes” that relate to proper worship, of course, have nothing comparable from other nations.

The enactments of the **Passover** and **Days of Unleavened Bread** are designated to be “statutes”:

This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, **as a statute (huqqah) forever**, you shall keep it as a feast. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. ... And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for **on this very day I**

³⁷⁹ This is a participle of the verb **ἐπισκοπέω** - **episkopeō**, meaning “give attention to”, “oversee”; related to **episkopos/episkopē**.

³⁸⁰ This may be simply an allusion to “age”.

³⁸¹ See **TWOT** article 728 page 316

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ See Genesis 49:10, Numbers 21:18, Deuteronomy 33:21

brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, **as a statute (huqqah) forever.**

For **the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians**, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, **the LORD will pass over the door** and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. You shall **observe this rite as a statute (hoq) for you and for your sons forever.** (Exodus 12:14-15a, 17, 23-24 ESV see also 13:10 and Leviticus 23:14, 21, 31, 41, Numbers 9:1-14)

The keeping of God's Feasts and appointed times is strictly matter of proper worship³⁸⁵ – there is nothing “legalistic” nor related to foreign “laws” in true worship. Both *hoq* and *huqqah* are similarly used several times in relation to the duties of the priests and the particulars of the prescribed sacrifices.³⁸⁶ It is in the so-called, “**Holiness Code**”, the specific prescriptions and proscriptions contained in Leviticus chapters eleven through fifteen and seventeen and following, that we begin to find “statutes” which are comparable to legal codes of other ancient nations. For example:

Adultery

If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. (Leviticus 20:10 ESV see also Deuteronomy 22:22)

From the Code of Hammurabi:

129: If the wife of a seignior has been caught while lying with another man, they shall bind them and throw them into the water. ... (ANET page 171)

From the Middle Assyrian Laws:

15: If a seignior has caught a(nother) seignior with his wife, when they have prosecuted him (and) convicted him, they shall put both of them to death ... (ANET page 181)

Lex Talionis

If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him, fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him. (Leviticus 24:19-20 ESV)

From the Code of Hammurabi:

196: If a seignior has destroyed the eye of a member of the aristocracy, they shall destroy his eye.

197: If he has broken another seignior's bone, they shall break his bone.

200: If a seignior has knocked out the tooth of a seignior ... they shall knock out his tooth.

(ANET page 175)

The words *hoq* and *huqqah* are NOT used in the **Covenant Code**, Exodus chapters twenty-one through twenty-three, but clearly many of the prescriptions and proscriptions in the Covenant Code follow the pattern of *hoq* and *huqqah*. Several of them are paralleled in other ancient codes. For example:

Safe Keeping of Property

If a man gives to his neighbor money or goods to keep safe, and it is stolen from the man's house, then, if the thief is found, he shall pay double. **If the thief is not found, the owner of the house shall come near to God to show whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property.** For every breach of trust, whether it is for an ox, for a donkey, for a sheep, for a cloak, or for any kind of lost thing, of which one says, 'This is it,' the case of both parties shall come before God. The one whom God condemns shall pay double to his neighbor. (Exodus 22:7-9 ESV)

From the Laws of Eshnunna:

36: **If a man gives property of his as a deposit** ... and if the property he gives disappears without that the house was burglarized ... **he (the depositary) will replace his (the depositor's) property.**

37: **If the man's (the depositary's) house either collapses or is burglarized** and together with the (property of the) deposit(or) ... loss on the part of the owner is incurred, **the owner of the house shall swear an oath** ... “I have done nothing improper or fraudulent” ... he shall have no claim against him.

(ANET page 163)

From the Code of Hammurabi:

125: **If a seignior deposited property for safe keeping** and ... his property has disappeared along with the property of the owner of the house, either through breaking in or through scaling (the wall), **the owner of the house, who was so careless** ... **shall make it good and make restitution** to the owner of the goods ...

(ANET page 171)

A Goring Ox

But **if the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past**, and **its owner has been warned** but has not kept it in, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death. ... **If the ox gores a slave**, male or female, **the owner shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver**, and the ox shall be stoned. ... **When one man's ox butts another's, so that it dies**, then they shall sell the live ox and share its price, and the dead beast also they shall share. (Exodus 21:29, 32, 35 ESV)

³⁸⁵ See also Exodus 23:12-17, Leviticus chapter 23, Deuteronomy 16:1-17

³⁸⁶ See Exodus 27:21, 28:43, 29:9,28 (ESV “due”), 30:21, Leviticus 3:17, 6:18,22 (ESV “decreed”), 7:34,36 (ESV “due”), 24:9

From the Laws of Eshnunna:

54: If an ox is known to habitually gore and the authorities have brought the fact to the knowledge of the owner, but he does not have his ox dehorned, it gores a man and causes (his) death, then the owner of the ox shall pay two-thirds of a mina of silver.

55: If it gores a slave and cause (his) death, he shall pay 15 shekels of silver.

53: If an ox gores an(other) ox and causes its death, both owners shall divide (among themselves) the price of the live ox and also the equivalent of the dead ox. (ANET page 163)

There are many other comparisons of similarity which could be made, but the differences primarily show a higher concern for human dignity and higher value of persons in the Bible. It is what is stated in the Bible that is missing from other codes that is significant. For example, the treatment of slaves – in the Biblical teaching, slaves remain persons with rights. In most ancient law codes, slaves are simply chattel.³⁸⁷

Statutes and *mish^epatim*

The provision of “cities of refuge” deals with the problem of “manslaughter” fairly – the killer is subject to a penalty, but is protected from arbitrary justice. There is nothing comparable to this in the provisions of other ancient nations:

Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee. But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die. (Exodus 21:12-14 ESV)

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall select cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person without intent may flee there. The cities shall be for you a refuge from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation for [mish^epat]. And the cities that you give shall be your six cities of refuge. You shall give three cities beyond the Jordan, and three cities in the land of Canaan, to be cities of refuge. These six cities shall be for refuge for the people of Israel, and for the stranger and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills any person without intent may flee there.

“But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer. The murderer shall be put to death. ... The avenger of blood shall himself put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death. ... But if he pushed him suddenly without enmity, or hurled anything on him without lying in wait ... then the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood, in accordance with these [mish^epatim]. And the congregation shall rescue the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge to which he had fled, and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil.

“But if the manslayer shall at any time go beyond the boundaries of his city of refuge to which he fled, and the avenger of blood finds him outside the boundaries of his city of refuge, and the avenger of blood kills the manslayer, he shall not be guilty of blood. For he must remain in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest, but after the death of the high priest the manslayer may return to the land of his possession.

And these things shall be for a statute (huggah) and [mish^epat] for you throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. ...” (Numbers 35:9-16, 19, 22, 24-29 ESV see also Deuteronomy 4:41-43, 19:4-13)

The purpose of this teaching is to ensure the implementation of true justice: no murderer can be allowed to live, but an accidental death is NOT murder. An accidental killing incurs a penalty, but NOT an execution. This instruction is specifically called a “statute”, “these things shall be for a huggah”. The words *mish^epat* and *mish^epatim* are also specifically used. The most important meaning of the singular, *mish^epat*, is “justness” as a character attribute of God.³⁸⁸ There is always in implication of “action” in *mish^epat*. It is the responsibility of the community to determine whether or not a murder has occurred, “the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation for *mish^epat*”.³⁸⁹ In this instance, *mish^epat* could be translated “justice”.

The plural, *mish^epatim*, is more complicated – “justness” has no plural. The meaning of *mish^epatim* is clearly brought out by Moses:

And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes (hoq) and the [mish^epatim] that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers,

³⁸⁷ This is discussed in detail in section 5.2 *Slavery*, in the paper “The Human Condition” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

³⁸⁸ See *Excursus 1 – mish^epat*, in the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

³⁸⁹ As discussed in the previous section *Excursus 3 – The Elders of Israel*, this inquiry was led by the “elders of the cities”.

is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you. Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal-peor, for the LORD your God destroyed from among you all the men who followed the Baal of Peor. But you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive today.

See, I have taught you statutes (hoq) and [mish^epatim], as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes (hoq), will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes (hoq) and [mish^epatim] so righteous as all this [torah] that I set before you today? (Deuteronomy 4:1-8 ESV)

Analysis of Moses' statement:

- **"hoq" and "mish^epatim" are thrice juxtaposed:** clearly, **they have distinct by related meanings.** "Statutes" are specific "rules", clearly defined proscriptions and prescriptions which require action: "*mish^epatim*" are therefore clearly **NOT prescriptions and proscriptions**, "rules", as the ESV likes to translate (the old translation of "judgements" is even worse).
- Moses adjures his audience to **"listen"** to his **"teaching"**, what is being **"taught"** is important – this implies contemplation, inculcation of the material: it is NOT trivial.
- Five times, **Moses stressing the need for action, "do them", "keep them"**; Moses is explicit, **"keep the commandments"**, מִצְוָה - mitz^ewah, this is a direct allusion to the Ten Commandments which are **the fundamental precepts upon which all of God's teaching, "torah", is based:** all **"statutes" and "mish^epatim" are derived from the Ten Commandments.**
- Moses is then specific about **the meaning of "mish^epatim"** – it is the wisdom, understanding, discernment that comes from **doing what God says, living by the Way of God, "that will be your wisdom and your understanding", "surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people"**.

The statutes contained in the Writings of Moses are in no sense intended to be a "complete" or "comprehensive" legal system. They are examples of how to apply "*mish^epatim*" to specific circumstances. A classic example of this is in the Covenant Code:

You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk. (Exodus 23:19b ESV see also Deuteronomy 14:21b)

Much has been written about the meaning of this. It was apparently something that the Canaanites did. But **why is it included in the context in which it exists?** In verses twelve through seventeen there is a brief **summary of the Sabbath and the three annual Feast Seasons.** This is a common pattern inspired by God – after presenting some teaching, here the Covenant Code, God alludes to the Feasts because it is through keeping the Feasts of God that True Worshipers come to understand the Plan of God. Verses eighteen and nineteen then mention items related to Feast Keeping (leaven and firstfruits), then there is the enigmatic statement of the second part of verse nineteen.

Starting in verse twenty, God begins to provide some details on the conquest of Canaan. What does **"boiling a kid in its mother's milk"** have to do with this context? The most important stipulation of the of the Sinai Covenant was to **"obey my voice"**.³⁹⁰ **The Ten Commandments** were then given as the most fundamental and important teaching, *torah*, as to what it means to **"obey God's voice"**. Immediately after the Ten Commandments, the Covenant Code was provided. The Covenant Code is the first detailed example of *torah* which God gave to Israel to prepare them to become a functioning community in the Promised Land.

The Sabbath and the annual Feast cycle are the means whereby God teaches his plan. They are fundamental to the Way of God. **The ways of the people in Canaan,** such as "boiling a kid in its mother's milk", are so obviously and blatantly wrong, that God includes it almost sarcastically, before he goes into the details of the conquest. **It is a contrasting transition from the teaching of the Way of God to the need for the destruction of the ways of the people of Canaan.**

³⁹⁰ See Exodus 19:5
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Judicial Matters

As noted above, many statutes deal with civil and criminal matters. There are provisions in the Writings of Moses to govern these activities; but again, they are exemplary and the implementation of them requires *mishpatim*. This relationship of *mishpatim* with legal matters is the cause of the traditional misunderstanding of the word, *mishpatim*, which has resulted in the English translation of “judgements”. **The most fundamental judicial matter is the ninth commandment** – the explicit context is clearly an official judicial setting; however, the implication is all forms of prevarication:³⁹¹

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.³⁹² (Exodus 20:16 ESV // Deuteronomy 5:20)

The **Covenant Code** contains many civil and criminal statutes, including some **to control judicial matters**:

You shall not **pervert the justice**³⁹³ due to your poor **in his lawsuit**.³⁹⁴
Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked.
And you shall **take no bribe**,³⁹⁵ for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.³⁹⁶ (Exodus 23:6-8 ESV)

Similarly, the **Holiness Code** contains provisions regarding judicial matters:

You shall do no **injustice in court**. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but **in righteousness shall you judge** your neighbor. (Leviticus 19:15 ESV)

The phrase “**in court**” is בַּמִּשְׁפָּט - bammishpat, “in the justness”, the implication is “**in the application of justice**”; so, “in court” is a reasonable translation. The phrase “shall you judge” is תִּשְׁפֹּט - tishpot, verb, qal, imperfect second masculine singular,³⁹⁷ from שָׁפַט - shaphat, the normal word for “judge” or “govern”³⁹⁸ – “imperfect” implies that it is to be a continuous process: **all judicial matters are to be performed in “righteousness”**.

In the speeches of Moses recorded in **Deuteronomy**, judicial matters are similarly discussed. The focus is **situations which may occur once Israel is settled in the Promised Land**. The following passage contains several general principles and is clearly **a specification of the model to be used by Israel**:

(8) **If any case arises requiring decision (mishpat)** between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, **any case within your towns that is too difficult for you**, then **you shall arise and go up to the place that the LORD your God will choose**.

(9) And you shall come to **the Levitical priests** and to **the judge (shaphat) who is in office in those days**, and you shall consult them, and **they shall declare to you the decision (mishpat)**. (10a) Then **you shall do according to what they declare to you** from that place that the LORD will choose.

(10b) And you shall **be careful to do according to all that they direct you**. (11) According to the instructions (torah) that they give you, and according to the decision (mishpat) which they pronounce to you, you shall do. **You shall not turn aside from the verdict that they declare to you**, either to the right hand or to the left.

(12a) **The man who acts presumptuously** by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge (shaphat), **that man shall die**.

(12b) So you shall **purge the evil from Israel**. (13) And **all the people shall hear and fear** and not act presumptuously again. (Deuteronomy 17:8-13 ESV see also 16:18-20)

Analysis of the passage:

- Verse 8 presupposes will be a system of **local judges**, “**within your towns**”, to whom judicial matters are first presented. For cases which they cannot decide, for whatever reason, there are to be **superior judges** located at the place where the Tabernacle is located, “**the place that YHWH your God will choose**”.
- In verse 9, **a two-tier system of judges** is prescribed, “**the Levitical priests**”, who would first hear the case, and “**the judge**”, who is the arbiter of last resort. One judge is specified – this

³⁹¹ See Leviticus 19:11b, Psalms 7:14, 101:7, Proverbs 6:16-19, 12:22a

³⁹² See also Exodus 23:1, Deuteronomy 19:15-21, Proverbs 19:5,9, 21:28a, 24:28, 25:18

³⁹³ In this instance “justice” is a reasonable translation of *mishpat*.

³⁹⁴ See also Deuteronomy 16:19, 24:17, 27:19, Isaiah 10:1-2, Jeremiah 5:28-29, Malachi 3:5

³⁹⁵ See also Deuteronomy 27:25, 2 Chronicles 19:7, Psalm 26:10, Proverbs 17:23, Isaiah 1:23, 5:23

³⁹⁶ See also Proverbs 17:26

³⁹⁷ See www.esv.org Hebrew Word Detail

³⁹⁸ See TWOT article 2443 page 947

foreshadows the situation during the “**period of the judges**” where, in general, there was one superior “judge” governing the nation.

- Verse 10a declares **the decision** by “the Levitical priests” or “the judge” **is final** and to be adhered to.
- Verses 10b and 11 emphasize the importance of following the judgement, “**you shall not turn aside from the verdict**”.
- Verse 12a prescribes **capital punishment** for violation of the judgement, “**the man who acts presumptuously ... shall die**”.
- The **two-fold objective** of the judicial system is specified in verses 12b and 13, “**purge the evil from Israel**” and “**the people shall hear and fear**”.

In the above passage, the word *mish^epat* is translated three times as “decision”. The most fundamental meaning of *mish^epat* is “justness” as a character attribute of God. The clear implication of this use of *mish^epat* is that **all judicial matters are to be conducted with the awareness that the person making the decision is acting on behalf of God**. This has enormous implications for those persons who are now called by God, who will represent the government of God once the Kingdom of God is established. **It is the responsibility of True Christians to fully understand the Teaching of God**, including the *mish^epatim*, represented by all the statutes, and the proscriptions and prescriptions on judicial matters. It is the application of this *mish^epatim* that will bring about the Wonderful World Tomorrow:

Behold **my servant**, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my [being] delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth **[mish^epat] to the nations**.
He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established **[mish^epat] in the earth**;
and the coastlands wait for his [torah]. (Isaiah 42:1, 4 ESV)

Excursus 5 – Analysis of Deuteronomy Chapters 13-25

Analytic Outline

This outline is not entirely sequential. Each section has a header which is a quotation from an earlier section of the Writings of Moses. The header generally demonstrates that the contents of the section are an elaboration or elucidation of previous material. Many more references could be cited. Where material in Deuteronomy is topical, it is included in the first section dealing with that topic. **The overarching theme of these chapters is preparation for Israel to take up nationhood in the Promised Land.**

“Make no mention of the names of other gods ... you shall not bow down to other gods or serve them”

(Ex23:13, 24)

13:1-5 False prophets: “let us go after other gods ... and let us serve them ... that prophet ... shall be put to death”

13:6-11 Relative or close friend: “let us go and serve other gods ... you shall kill him”

13:12-18 The inhabitants of a city: “let us go and serve other gods ... put the inhabitants of that city to the sword”

“You shall not make yourselves detestable with any swarming thing ... you shall not defile yourselves” (Lv11:43)

14:1-3 Physical cleanliness: “you are a holy people to YHWH ... you shall not eat any abomination”

14:4-20 Edible animals: “these are the animals you may eat ... unclean ... you shall not eat”

14:21 Proper preparation: “you shall not eat anything that has died naturally ... you are ... holy to YHWH”

“Every tithe of the land ... is YHWH’s; it is holy to YHWH” (Lv27:30)

14:22-27 Consumption of the tithe: “tithe all the yield of your seed ... eat there before YHWH ... and rejoice”

14:28-29 Sharing the tithe: “bring out all the tithe ... the Levite ... the sojourner ... shall come and eat and be filled”

“If your brother becomes poor ... cannot maintain himself ... you shall not make him serve as a slave”

(Lv25:35a, 39b)

15:1-6 Seventh year release: “every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor”

15:7-11 Maintenance of the poor: “you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need”

15:12-18 Temporary servitude: “if your brother ... is sold ... in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you”

“The firstborn ... your oxen ... your sheep ... you shall give to me ... no blemish in it” (Ex22:29b-30a, Lv22:21b)

15:19-20 Firstborn offered: “firstborn ... of your herd and flock ... eat ... at the place that YHWH will choose”

15:21-23 Blemished eaten at home: “if it has any blemish ... you shall eat it within your towns”

17:1 Blemished cannot be offered: “a blemish, any defect whatever ... is an abomination to YHWH your God”

“Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me ... these are the appointed [times] of YHWH”

(Ex23:14, Lv23:2bα)

16:1-8 Passover & Feast of Unleavened Bread: “offer the Passover sacrifice ... seven days ... eat unleavened bread”

16:9-12 Feast of Harvest of Firstfruits: “count seven weeks ... from the time the sickle is put to the standing grain”

16:13-15 Feast of Booths: “rejoice ... you ... son ... daughter ... servant ... Levite ... sojourner ... fatherless”

16:16-17 Offer to God: “very man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of YHWH your God”

“You shall do no injustice ... you shall not be partial ... in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor” (Lv19:15)

16:18-20, 24:17-18 Judges and officers: “you shall not pervert justice ... justice, and only justice, you shall follow”

17:2-7 Covenant transgression: “man or woman ... served other gods and worshiped them ... shall be put to death”

17:8-13 Authority of judges: “do according to all that they direct ... the man who acts presumptuously ... shall die”

19:15-21 Two or more witnesses: “a single witness shall not suffice ... a false witness ... do to him as he had meant”

21:1-9 Unsolved murders: “elders of the city nearest to the slain man testify, ‘Our hands did not shed blood ...’”

24:7 Kidnapping: “if a man is found stealing one of his brothers ... that thief shall die”

24:16 Individual responsibility: “fathers shall not be put to death [for] children, nor shall children [for] fathers”

25:1-3 Administration of punishment: “the guilty man ... the judge shall cause him ... to be beaten in his presence”

25:11-12 Indecency: “... puts out her hand and seizes him by the private parts, then you shall cut off her hand ...”

“... before any king reigned over the Israelites ... you shall not ... curse a ruler of your people” (Gn36:31, Ex22:28)

17:14-17 Israelite king to be God’s steward: “he must not ... cause the people to return to Egypt”

17:18-20 Israelite king to fear YHWH: “keeping all the words of this [torah] and these statutes, and doing them”

“... separate the Levites from among the people of Israel, and the Levites shall be mine” (Nm8:14)

18:1-5 No inheritance for Levites: “they shall eat ... from those offering a sacrifice ... firstfruits of your grain ...”

18:6-8 Levitical towns: “if a Levite comes from any of your towns out of all Israel, where he lives ...”

“You shall not interpret omens or tell fortunes ... not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute”

(Lv19:26b,29)

18:9-14 Abominable Practices: “burns son or his daughter ... practices divination ... one who inquires of the dead”

23:17-18 Prostitution: “none of the daughters ... and none of the sons of Israel shall be a cult prostitute”

“... a prophet ... make ... known to him in a vision ... with my servant Moses ... I speak mouth to mouth”

(Nm12:6-8)

18:15-19 Prophet like Moses: “I will raise up for them a prophet like you ... I will put my words in his mouth”

18:20-22 False prophets: “the prophet has spoken it presumptuously ... you need not be afraid of him.”

“Whoever strikes a man ... he did not lie in wait for him ... appoint for you a place to which he may flee”

(Ex21:12-13)

19:1-3 Cities of refuge: “set apart three cities for yourselves in the land ... so that any manslayer can flee to them”

19:4-6 Manslayer and Avenger: “manslayer ... fleeing may save his life ... avenger of blood ... strike him fatally”

19:7-10 Additional cities: “if YHWH your God enlarges your territory ... you shall add three other cities”

19:11-13 Premeditated murder: “hand him over to the avenger of blood, so that he may die”

21:22-23 Dignity to a body: “his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day”

“If fire breaks out ... grain or ... the field is consumed, he who started the fire shall make full restitution” (Ex22:6)

19:14 Land ownership: “you shall not move your neighbour’s landmark ...”

22:1-4 Neighbour’s property: “you shall take them back to your brother ... any lost thing of your brother’s”

22:8 Construction responsibility: “when you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof ...”

23:24-25 Neighbour’s crop: “you may eat your fill ... but you shall not put any in your bag”

“When you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you ...” (Nm10:9)

20:1-4 YHWH fights: “YHWH ... goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory”

20:5-8 Exemptions from service: “Is there any man who ... Let him go back to his house, lest he die ...”

20:9 Organization: “the officers have finished speaking to the people, then commanders shall be appointed”

20:10-15 Cities far from you: “offer terms of peace to it ... all the people ... shall do forced labor”

20:16-18 Canaanite cities: “save alive nothing that breathes ... devote them to complete destruction”

20:19-20 Fruit-bearing trees: “not destroy its trees ... you may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down”

21:10-14 Female captives: “desire to take her to be your wife ... shall not sell her ... nor ... treat her as a slave”

23:9-14 Cleanliness in camp: “YHWH your God walks in ... your camp ... your camp must be holy”

24:5 Newly married man: “shall not go out with the army ... be free at home one year to be happy with his wife”

25:17-19 Destruction of Amalek: “remember what Amalek did ... blot out the memory of Amalek”

"Go in to your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her ..." (Gn38:8)

21:15-17 Firstborn son: "acknowledge firstborn ... giving him a double portion ... he is the firstfruits of his strength"

21:18-21 Rebellious son: "he will not obey our voice ... all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones"

22:5 Family roles: "a woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak"

22:13-19 Wrongful accusation: "the elders of that city shall take the man and whip him ... he may not divorce her"

22:20-21 Confirmed accusation: "bring out the young woman ... the men of her city shall stone her to death"

24:1-4 Divorce reconciliation: "she ... becomes another man's wife ... former husband ... may not take her again"

25:5-6 Levirate marriage: "if brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son ..."

25:7-10 Levirate refusal: "if the man does not take his brother's wife ... his brother's wife shall ... spit in his face"

"You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk" (Ex23:19b)

22:6-7 Mercy to animals: "if you come across a bird's nest ... you shall not take the mother with the young"

22:10 Utility of animals: "you shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together"

25:4 Cruelty to animals: "you shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain"

"... make tassels on the corners of their garments ... and to put a cord of blue on the tassel ..." (Nm15:38)

22:9 Two kinds of seed: "you shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed ..."

22:11 Mixed material: "you shall not wear cloth of wool and linen mixed together"

22:12 Tassels on garments: "you shall make yourself tassels on the four corners of the garment ..."

"If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both ... shall surely be put to death" (Lv20:10)

22:22-24 Dual punishment: "lying with the wife of another man ... betrothed virgin ... in the city and lies with her"

22:25-27 Single punishment: "the betrothed young woman cried for help there was no one to rescue her"

22:28-29 Reduced punishment: "a virgin who is not betrothed ... he may not divorce her all his days"

22:30 Forbidden marriage: "a man shall not take his father's wife"

"For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you ..." (Nm15:15)

23:1 Physical damage: "no one whose testicles are crushed or male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly"

23:2 Unfit lineage: "no one born of a forbidden union may enter the assembly"

23:3-6 Ammonites and Moabites forbidden: "they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way"

23:7-8 Edomites and Egyptians: "children born to them in the third generation may enter the assembly"

"You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him ... you shall not oppress your neighbor ..." (Ex22:21, Lv19:13)

23:15-16 Runaway slaves: "you shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped ..."

23:19-20 Loan interest: "you shall not charge interest on loans to your brother ... you may charge a foreigner"

24:6, 10-13, 17b Essentials of life: "no one shall take a mill or an upper millstone in pledge ..."

24:14-15 Payment of wages: "you shall give him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets ..."

24:19-22 Gleaning crops: "when you reap your harvest ... and forget a sheaf ... you shall not go back to get it"

25:13-16 Fair trade: "you shall not have in your bag two kinds of weights, a large and a small"

"Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, 'If anyone makes a special vow to YHWH ...'" (Lv27:2)

23:21-23 Fulfill vows: "If you make a vow to YHWH ... be careful to do what has passed your lips ..."

"When a man is afflicted with a leprous disease, he shall be brought to the priest ..." (Lv13:9)

24:8-9 Communicable diseases: "be very careful to do according to all that the Levitical priests shall direct you"

Thematic Analysis of Deuteronomy Chapters 13 through 25

	prophet / prophecy / promise	Way of God	historical allusion	rebellion / evil / wickedness	idolatry / pagan practice	punishment for evil	judicial inquiry	Nature of God	holiness / Holy Days	animals	sacrifices / offerings / tithes	social justice	place of worship	communal organization
Dt13	v1-5	v3b-4, 11,18	v5bα,10	v2b,5b,6, 11-13	v2b,6-7	v5a,8-10, 15-17a	v14	v17b						
Dt14		v21a,23b	v2		v1b,21b			v29b	v1-3,21a	v4-20, 21b	v22-28	v29a	v23a	v27,29a
Dt15	v6b	v5,9a,11,23	v15	v9a				v4b,6a, 10b,14b			v19-22	v1-4a, 7-18	v20	v1-18
Dt16		v8,11a, 12b,14a	v1b,3b, 6b,12a		v21-22a		v18-20	v15b, 17b,22b	v1-17		v2a,5,6b, 10b, 16b-17a	v11b, 14b	v2b,5-6a, 7a,11b, 15a	v1-17
Dt17	v14	v10-11, 13,19-20	v16	v2,12a	v3	v5,7,12b	v4,6, 8-12				v1		v8b	v9,14-20
Dt18	v2,9, 15-22	v14b,19	v16-17	v20a	v9-14	v20b		v12a	v13		v1b,3-4		v6b-7	v1-8
Dt19	v1,8,14b	v9a,20				v12-13, 19,21	v15-21							v2-14,17
Dt20	v16a	v14b	v1b		v18	v16b-17		v4						v1-20
Dt21	v1a,23b	v9b		v18-20		v21-23a	v5,19		v23bα		v3-4,8	v14,23a		v1-17
Dt22				v5,30		v18-25	v13-17	v5b		v1-4, 6-7,10				v1-30
Dt23	v20b	v6,21-23	v4-5,7		v17-18			v14	v1-3,9-13			v15-16, 19-20a		v1-25
Dt24	v4b	v8	v9,18,22	v4		v7b,16	v17	v4aβ				v6,10-16, 19-21		v1-22
Dt25	v15b,19a		v17-18	v16,19b		v2-3,9-10,12	v1,7-8	v16		v4				v1-16

Even a casual comparison of the themes in Deuteronomy 13-25 with the themes of the Covenant Code and the Holiness Code, makes obvious the similarity of content.

These charts are available in spreadsheet format at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

Thematic Analysis of the Covenant Code and the Holiness Code

	sacrifices / offerings / tithes	idolatry / pagan practice	communal organization	crimes against persons	judicial inquiry	property crimes	social justice	animals	historical allusion	Nature of God	rebellion / evil / wickedness	holiness / Holy Days	place of worship	prophet / prophecy / promise	Way of God
Ex20	v24a,25-26	v23								v22,24b					
Ex21			v1-11,13	v12,14-32	v13,22b,29,36	v33-36									
Ex22	v29-30	v18,20	v16-17,19,24a	v24b	v8-9,11	v1-15	v21a,23a,25-27a	v19,30b,31b	v21b	v23b-24a,27b	v28	v31			
Ex23	v18-19a	v13,24,19b,33	v1a,2a,4-5,10-11		v1-3,6-8		v9a,11b,12b	v4-5,12b,19b	v9b,15b	v7b,21-22	v2a	v12a,14-17	v24b	v20,23,25b-31	v25a,32
Lv11								v1-23,26-27a,29b-30,41-42	v45a	v44a,45b		v24-25,27b-29a,31-40,43-47			v43a,44b,47
Lv12	v6-8a		v3									v1-5	v12a		v8b
Lv13			v1-59												
Lv14	v4-7,10-31,49-53a		v1-57									v20b,29,53b,57a	v11,23		
Lv15	v14-15a,29-30a		v1-30,32									v15b,30b-31a	v14,29,31b		v31b
Lv17	v3,5-6	v7						v13			v16	v10-16	v1-9		v7
Lv18		v3b,21,24b,27	v6-20						v3a	v1-2	v22-23,27-30a	v24a,30b		v25,28	v3-5,26,30
Lv19	v5-8,21-22,23-25	v4,26b-29,31a	v3a,16,17-18,20,23-25,32a,35-36a	v20	v15,16b		v9-14a,33-34a,36a	v19aβ	34b,36b	v3b,4b,10b,25b,31b,34bβ	v7-8	v1-2,19,22,26a,30,31b	v21b		v3,14b,18b,30,32b,37
Lv20		v1-6,23,27	v9-21,27b							v3a,5a,24b	v3-6,15-16	v7,25-26		v24a	v8,22,24b
Lv21		v5	v7,9,13-15,21-24									v1-23			

	sacrifices / offerings / tithes	idolatry / pagan practice	communal organization	crimes against persons	judicial inquiry	property crimes	social justice	animals	historical allusion	Nature of God	rebellion / evil / wickedness	holiness / Holy Days	place of worship	prophet / prophecy / promise	Way of God
Lv22	v17-25, 29-30		v1-16					v26-28	v33		v1-3,9	v1-16			v31-32
Lv23	v8-14, 16b-21,38						v22		v43-44	v22b		v1-44			v43
Lv24			v22-23	v17,19-20, 21b		v18,21a					v10-16		v1-9		
Lv25			v1-23,29-34, 39-54				v10,13, 24-28, 35-38		v55b	v21,55bβ					v18,55
Lv26		v1							v13a,45	v4-13, v40-45	v14-39	v2		v4-10	v2-3,40-46
Lv27	v26-33		v1-25						v34						

Excursus 6 – The Perspective of the Jordan River

The setting of Moses' speeches recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy is the Plains of Moab on the east side of the Jordan River. Most of the references to the Jordan River are in the quoted words of Moses from his speeches. In most of these, **Moses refers to the impending crossing of the Jordan River from the east to the west**, from the camp in the Plains of Moab into the Promised Land, for example:

Hear, O Israel: **you are to cross over the Jordan today**, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, cities great and fortified up to heaven ...

And **when the LORD your God brings you into the land** that you are entering to take possession of it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. **Are they not beyond the Jordan**, west of the road, **toward the going down of the sun**, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oak of Moreh? For **you are to cross over the Jordan** to go in to take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

(Deuteronomy 9:1, 11:29-31a ESV see also 12:10, 27:2, 4, 12, 31:13, 32:47)

Moses had been condemned to die before the entry into the Promised Land.³⁹⁹ Moses repeatedly pleaded with God to reverse this decision and allow him to cross the Jordan:

And **I pleaded with the LORD at that time**, saying, 'O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours? **Please let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan**, that good hill country and Lebanon.' But the LORD was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me. And **the LORD said to me**, '**Enough from you; do not speak to me of this matter again.**

Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward, and **look at it with your eyes**, for **you shall not go over this Jordan.**

(Deuteronomy 3:23-27 ESV see also 4:21-22, 31:2)

Moses refers to the Jordan River in recounting recent events:

So I **sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon the king of Heshbon**, with words of peace, saying, '**Let me pass through your land.** I will go only by the road; I will turn aside neither to the right nor to the left. You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat, and give me water for money, that I may drink. Only let me pass through on foot, as the sons of Esau who live in Seir and the Moabites who live in Ar did for me, **until I go over the Jordan into the land that the LORD our God is giving to us.**'

(Deuteronomy 2:26-29 ESV see also 3:17, 20)

Moses warned the people to avoid apostasy once the Jordan River is crossed:

... **if you act corruptly** by making a carved image in the form of anything, and by doing what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, so as to provoke him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that **you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.**

You will not live long in it, but will be utterly destroyed. (Deuteronomy 4:25b-26 ESV see also 30:18)

All of these references are from the perspective of someone on the east side of the Jordan River looking to the west side of the Jordan River. This is exactly what would be expected of first person speech of Moses being recorded as he spoke. There are, however, several **passages which are written from the perspective of someone on the west side of the Jordan River looking back to the east side.** These were clearly written by the "narrator", the compiler of Moses' speeches into the book as we have them:

These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah ... In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, **Moses spoke to the people of Israel** according to all that the LORD had given him in commandment to them, after he had defeated Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth and in Edrei. **Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab** ...

Then **Moses set apart three cities in the east beyond the Jordan**, that the manslayer might flee there, anyone who kills his neighbor unintentionally, without being at enmity with him in time past; he may flee to one of these cities and save his life ...

This is the [torah] that Moses set before the people of Israel. These are the testimonies, the statutes, and the [mish'patim], which **Moses spoke to the people of Israel** when they came out of Egypt, **beyond the Jordan in the valley opposite Beth-peor**, in the land of **Sihon** the king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the people of Israel defeated when they came out of Egypt.

And **they took possession of his land and the land of Og**, the king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, **who lived to the east beyond the Jordan**; from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Valley of the

Arnon, as far as Mount Sirion (that is, Hermon), together with all the Arabah on the east side of the Jordan as far as the Sea of the Arabah, under the slopes of Pisgah.
(Deuteronomy 1:1a, 3-5a, 4:41-42, 44-49 ESV)

There is one anomaly to this pattern:

So we took the land at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, from the Valley of the Arnon to Mount Hermon ... (Deuteronomy 3:8 ESV)

This perspective is from the west looking back to the east. As the text of Deuteronomy now stands, Moses' "first speech" extends from chapter one verse six through chapter four verse forty. Most likely this structure is an editorial construction, i.e., material from more than one actual speech has been combined into this section. **The inclusion of the "wrong" perspective in chapter three verse eight suggests this.**

These two perspectives on the Jordan River are exactly what would be expected in a document based on recorded speeches presented on one side of the river, the east side looking to the west side. Latter, after crossing the river, the speeches were assembled into the document as we have it with comments by a "narrator" – the person or persons who assembled the document on the west side of the river looking back to the east side.

Excursus 7 - Analysis of Non-Davidic Psalms

The Davidic Psalms are analyzed in the paper, "**David - A Man After My Own Heart**", located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca. Many non-Davidic Psalms have been quoted in the current paper; therefore, an organized analysis of the corpus is justified.

Many of the non-Davidic Psalms contain the same musical terms in the superscriptions as discussed in **Excursus 5 – Notes on the Davidic Psalms** of the aforementioned paper, please refer to the discussion there. Similarly, **the typical pattern observed in the Davidic Psalms is also observable in some of the non-Davidic Psalms**: a **main theme** is introduced; some **instruction** is provided related to the main theme; a **contrast** to the main theme is provided; and, finally there is as **summation** related to the main theme. Where the pattern is used, it is referred to as the **"typical pattern"**. In reading the following notes, reference should be made to the **"Chart – Analysis of Non-Davidic Psalms"**.

Notes – on Non-Davidic Psalms

Psalms 1: contrast the Way of God, **"his delight is in the torah of YHWH"** (vs 1-3, 6a) with the way of wickedness, **"the way of the wicked will perish"** (vs 4-5, 6b)

Psalms 2: **typical pattern**: main theme – the Plan of God **"I will make the nations your heritage"** (vs 4-9); contrast – the way of the world **"why do the nations rage"** (vs 1-3); instruction **"be warned, O rulers of the earth"** (vs 10-11); summation **"kiss the Son"** (vs 12)

Psalms 9-10: In the Septuagint, Psalms 9 and 10 are combined into a single Psalm. The two Psalms together may be taken as a "defective acrostic" – some letters are missing; some, are out of order.⁴⁰⁰

Typical pattern: main theme – apparent success of the wicked **"for the wicked boasts"** (vs 2-11, 13); contrast – deliverance of YHWH, retributive justice **"arise O YHWH ... forget not the afflicted"** (vs 1, 12, 14-15); instruction – **"YHWH is king forever"** (vs 16); summation **"you hear the desire of the afflicted"** (vs 17-18)

Psalms 33: The Psalmist calls on True Worshipers to **"give thanks to YHWH"** (vs 1-3); he alludes to the **Nature of God** (vs 4-5) and **General Revelation** (vs 6-7) as the basis whereby all nations will come to **worship the True God** (vs 8-15); the **way of man cannot bring salvation** (vs 16-17) only the **Way of God** can deliver (vs 18-22)

Psalms 42: This is the first Psalm ascribed to the **"sons of Korah"**. "Korah" was a Levite descended from Kohath ben Levi.⁴⁰¹ Korah was involved in a rebellion against Moses in the wilderness and died, but not

⁴⁰⁰ See NETS pages 550-552; www.esv.org Psalm 9 ESV Notes

⁴⁰¹ See Numbers 16:1, 1 Chronicles 6:16,22

all his sons died.⁴⁰² The clans of Kohath had originally been assigned the work of carrying the holy items of the Tabernacle.⁴⁰³ **David assigned the “sons of Korah” to work as “singers”** at the Tabernacle and the tent where the Ark of Covenant resided.⁴⁰⁴ After the exile, the “sons of Korah” were assigned the work of “gatekeepers”.⁴⁰⁵

The Psalmist is away from his duties in the service of God, **“when shall I come and appear before God”**; he longs to return (vs 1-2, 4, 6b-7). He is under **threat from enemies** (vs 3, 9b-10), and is **discouraged** (vs 5-6a, 11a). He prays for hope, **“hope in God ... my salvation”** (vs 8-9a, 11b)

Psalm 43: This Psalm has no ascription – the thought flow follows closely from the previous Psalm. The Psalmist reacts to the **threat from enemies** (vs 1) by trusting in God’s deliverance and return to active duty, **“then I will go to the altar of God”** (vs 2-4). The last verse is identical to the last verse of the previous Psalm.

Psalm 44: This Psalm could have been written in exile. The Psalmist has heard about the conquest of old, **“we have heard with our ears”** (vs 1-3), and laments the current situation, **“you have sold your people”** (vs 9-16), but continues to trust in God, **“rise up come to our help”** (vs 4-8, 23-26). The Psalmist accounts himself among the true remnant, **“we have not forgotten you”** (vs 17-22).

Psalm 45: This Psalm was no doubt written about one of the kings of Israel (vs 1) – David, Solomon, or perhaps Hezekiah or Josiah; but **taken as a Messianic Psalm, the imagery is striking**. The teaching of Christ is foreshadowed, **“grace is poured upon your lips”** (vs 2). The Battle of Armageddon is anticipated, **“gird your sword on your thigh”** (vs 3-5).⁴⁰⁶ The King of kings will rule forever, **“your throne, O God, is forever and ever”** (vs 6-9a). The Church will be the “queen”, the bride of the King, **“at your right hand stands the queen”** (vs 9b-11, 13-15).⁴⁰⁷ All nations will seek to learn the Way of God, **“nations will praise you forever and ever”** (vs 12, 16-17).⁴⁰⁸

Psalm 46: “According to Alamothe.” This is a unique phrase in a superscription. The Hebrew is עַלְי־עֲלֹמֹת - al‘alamoth; “alamoth” is the plural of עֲלֵמָה - al‘mah, “young girl”, “virgin”. **Most of this Psalm is prophetic, looking to the end-time and the World Tomorrow**. If the first part of verse four is an allusion to such prophecies as Ezekiel chapter forty-seven and Zechariah chapter fourteen verse eight, then this is a very late Psalm, and the prophetic imagery could have been gleaned from earlier prophecies. **Regardless of the date of the Psalm, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is clearly visible to coherently bring together the prophetic images.**

The Psalmist expresses his trust in God’s deliverance, **“God is our refuge”** (vs 1-2a, 7, 11). Then the Psalmist looks to prophesized global disruptions,⁴⁰⁹ **“the earth gives way”** (vs 2a, 3). Then he moves on to the establishment of the Kingdom of God,⁴¹⁰ **“when morning dawns”** (vs 4-5). Next the Psalmist looks to the Day of YHWH and the Battle of Armageddon,⁴¹¹ **“the nations rage”** (vs 6, 8). Finally, he looks to the World Tomorrow,⁴¹² **“he makes wars to cease”** (vs 9-10).

Psalm 47: This Psalm also looks **the establishment of the Kingdom of God**. YHWH will assume his role as King of kings at the Second Advent, **“a great king over all the earth”** (vs 2, 5, 7a, 8). When the World Tomorrow is established all people over the whole earth will rejoice, **“clap your hands all peoples”** (vs 1, 6, 7b, 9). **Verses three and four** are clearly an allusion to the conquest, but they also look to the second exodus and the establishment of the New Israel in the Promised Land.

⁴⁰² See Numbers 16:32, 26:10-11

⁴⁰³ See Numbers 4:1-15

⁴⁰⁴ See 1 Chronicles 6:31-37

⁴⁰⁵ See 1 Chronicles 9:17-19

⁴⁰⁶ See Revelation 19:15,21

⁴⁰⁷ See Revelation 19:7-9

⁴⁰⁸ See Micah 4:1-3

⁴⁰⁹ See Isaiah 24:1,19-20, Zephaniah 1:2

⁴¹⁰ See Ezekiel 47:1-6, Zechariah 14:8-9

⁴¹¹ See Revelation 9:14-16, 16:12-16, 19:17-21, Isaiah 24:17-18,21, 34:1-2, Jeremiah 25:30-32, Joel 2:11, 3:16

⁴¹² See Micah 4:3, 5:10-11, Zephaniah 3:11, Zechariah 9:10

Psalm 48: The Psalmist walks around old Jerusalem, “**the city of our God**” (vs 1-3, 12-13a). Possibly the Psalmist is reporting a vision, but at least in his mind’s eye **he looks beyond**, “**as we have heard, so we have seen**” (vs 8aα). Possibly having an historical allusion in mind, **he clearly looks forward** to the Day of YHWH when **Jerusalem will be established forever**,⁴¹³ “**you shattered the ships of Tarshish**” (vs 4-8). Next, the Psalmist contemplates the **Nature of God**, considering God’s greatness to accomplish these things, “**we have thought on your *hesed* O God**” (vs 9-11). Finally, he enjoins his listeners to **proclaim the gospel**, “**tell the next generation**” (vs 13b-14).

Psalm 49: This Psalm could have been labelled a “mas^ekil”, a “**wisdom Psalm**”. The Psalmist states his purpose, “**my mouth shall speak wisdom**” (vs 1-4). He deals at length with the “**human condition**” – human beings without the knowledge of God, “**without understanding he is like the beasts that perish**” (vs 5-14a, 14bβ, 16-20). The Psalm is climaxed by a stated **awareness of the resurrection**, “**God will ransom my life from the power of the grave**” (vs 9a, 14bα, 15).

Psalm 50: This is the first Psalm ascribed to “**Asaph**”. The Bible identifies several individuals named “Asaph”, **any of whom could have composed one or more Psalms**:

- A contemporary of **King David**: a Levite descended from Gershom ben Levi who David appointed as a singer, “**Asaph ben Berechiah**”: see 1 Chronicles 6:31-43, 15:16-19, Nehemiah 12:46
- **Asaph ben Berechiah** is likely the same person David appointed to minister at the tent of the Ark of the Covenant: see 1 Chronicles 16:4-7, 37-38
- **The descendants of Asaph ben Berechiah seem to have formed an order of Levitical singers**: see 1 Chronicles 25:1-9, 26:1, 2 Chronicles 5:12
- This group of singers, the “**sons of Asaph**” continued to be identified about a century later, in the time of **King Jehoshaphat**: see 2 Chronicles 20:13-14
- And again, the “**sons of Asaph**” continued to be identified after about another century in the time of **King Hezekiah**: see 2 Chronicles 29:12-13
- “**Asaph the seer**” – is likely an allusion to Asaph ben Berechiah: see 2 Chronicles 29:30
- A contemporary of **King Hezekiah**: Joah, the **son of Asaph**, was a scribe for Hezekiah – this “Asaph” may be a distinct individual, father of Joah, or it may simply mean that “Joah” was a member of the “sons of Asaph”: see 2 Kings 18:18, 37, Isaiah 36:3, 22
- And again, after about another fifty years in the time of **King Josiah**, the “**sons of Asaph**” continue to be identified: see 2 Chronicles 35:15
- **After the exile**, the “**sons of Asaph**” continue to be identified: see Ezra 2:41, 3:10, Nehemiah 7:44, 11:22
- In the time of Nehemiah, **two individuals are identified as “son of Asaph”** – again, these may be distinct individuals, or it may mean the named persons are member of the “sons of Asaph”: see Nehemiah 11:17, 12:35
- A **Persian official** in the time of Nehemiah: Nehemiah 2:8

It is most likely that the collection of Psalms attributed to “Asaph” came out of the “sons of Asaph”. Probably **Asaph ben Berechiah** initiated a tradition of Psalmody in imitation of David, and the tradition was carried down through his descendants.

Much of Psalm 50 is presented as first-person speech by YHWH. The **typical pattern** is observable: main theme – God speaks to all humanity, “**gather to me my faithful ones**”, (vs 1-15); within this, there are **several sub-themes**: when the time comes to act, God will take control, “**our God comes**” (vs 1-3); the first resurrection, “**he may judge his people**” (vs 4-5); the Nature of God, “**if I were hungry, I would not tell you**” (vs 6-13). Contrast – the wicked, “**to the wicked God says**” (vs 16-22). Instruction – “**call upon me in the day of trouble**” (vs 14-15). Summation – “**I will show the salvation of God**” (vs 23).

Psalm 67: This brief song looks to the World Tomorrow, “**your way may be known on earth**” (vs 2, 7b), when the Kingdom of God will extend over the whole earth, “**all the ends of the earth fear him**” (vs 1-7).

⁴¹³ See Ezekiel 27:25-27, Revelation 18:11-20
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The government of God will bring utopia, **“you judge the peoples with equity”** (vs 1, 4, 6-7a), and all will worship the True God, **“all the peoples praise you”** (vs 3, 5).

Psalm 71: typical pattern: main theme – trust in God for deliverance from “enemies” now, **“rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked”** (vs 1-14), and for ultimate salvation, **“will revive me again from the depths of the earth”** (vs 20-21); contrast – teaching the Way of God, **“my mouth will tell of your righteous acts”** (vs 15-18); instruction – the Nature of God, **“O God, who is like you?”** (vs19); summation – **“my lips will shout for joy”** (vs22-25).

Psalm 72: This Psalm is clearly Messianic. The ascription is לְשֹׁלֹמֹה - “lishlomoh”, to/of Solomon. Verse twenty raises the possibility that it was written by David for Solomon. Throughout the Psalm, “king” is typically “Solomon”; but, **anti-typically, the Messiah**. In verses 1-4, the Psalmist prays for godly attributes for the typical king to lead the people, **“may he judge your people with righteousness”**. Verses 5-14 look primarily to the Messiah, the anti-type, **“may all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him”**. Verses 15-16 return to the type, **“long may he live”**. **Verse 17 is dual** – both typical and anti-typical. Verses 18-20 are a **doxology** – possibly applying more to Book Two of the Psalms, than to this particular Psalm.

Psalm 73: typical pattern: main theme – the life of a True Worshipper in the world of Satan, the human condition, **“I was envious of the arrogant”** (vs 1-3a, 13-17, 21-23); contrast – the abundance and ease of the wicked, **“always at ease, they increase in riches”** (vs 3b-12), but retributive justice will come, **“they are destroyed in a moment”** (vs 18-20); instruction – salvation will come to True Worshipers, **“you guide me with your counsel”** (vs 24-26); summation – **“I have made the Lord YHWH my refuge”** (vs 27-28).

Psalm 74: This Psalm is best understood as exilic (vs 1-3); **typical pattern:** main theme – the Plan of God, after the destruction, how is God going to work things out, **“there is none among us who knows how long”** (vs 1-3, 9, 12-17); contrast – the “wicked” and the need for retributive justice, **“Why do you hold back your hand”** (4-8, 10-11, 18); instruction – a plea for God’s help, **“Have regard for the covenant”**, (vs 19-21); summation – **“Arise, O God”**, (vs 22-23).

Psalm 75: This Psalm appears to allude to **some historic event** when YHWH provided a deliverance, **“we recount your wondrous deeds”** (vs 1); however, it clearly looks **forward to the Day of YHWH**, **“at the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity”** (vs2-5.) God is in control of history, **“it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another”** (vs 6-8) – note that verse eight appears to be an allusion to Jeremiah’s prophecy in chapter twenty-nine verses fifteen through twenty-nine. The Psalmist ends with a determination to preach the gospel, **“I will declare it forever”** (vs 9-10).

Psalm 76: In this Psalm, **it is difficult to NOT see** in verses three through six **an allusion to the destruction of Sennacherib’s army**⁴¹⁴ (vs 3-6). The Psalmist sets the stage by establishing Jerusalem as the city of God, **“his abode has been established in Salem”** (vs 1-2). After the salvific act of God, the Psalmist extolls God’s control of history, **“who can stand before you”** (vs 7-10); **Verse ten is difficult** – it is best taken as a contrast, “the wrath of man” in the world today will be converted to “praise” in the World Tomorrow. The Psalmist ends with an affirmation to live by the Way of God, **“make your vows ... and perform them”** (vs 11-12).

Psalm 77: This Psalm appears to be exilic, **“are his promises at an end for all time”** (vs 7-9). The Psalmist is in a difficult mental state, **“my mind refuses to be comforted”** (vs 1-4). He looks for comfort in past salvific acts of God, **“I consider the days of old”** (vs 5-6, 10-12). The Psalmist finds solace in his inquiry, **“you are the God who works wonders”** (vs 13-14). He ends with a brief recount of the origins of Israel, **“you with your arm redeemed your people”**, (vs 15-20)

Psalm 78: This is a **“wisdom Psalm”**, a mas^ekil; the Psalmist, possibly Asaph ben Berechiah, is specific about his purpose, “give ear, O my people, to **my teaching** ... I will utter **dark sayings from of old** ... that **the next generation** might know ... that they should **not be like their fathers** ... whose **heart was not**

⁴¹⁴ See 2 Kings 19:32-35, Isaiah 37:33-36
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steadfast" (vs 1-8). The Psalmist starts his historical survey by alluding to the rebellion of Jeroboam,⁴¹⁵ **"the Ephraimites ... did not keep God's covenant"** (vs 9-11). For most of the Psalm, the author focuses on the Exodus and Wilderness experience, **"their heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not faithful to his covenant"** (vs 12-53). He alludes to the apostasy of the Judges Period, **"they tested and rebelled against the Most High God"** (vs 54-58). The Battle of Ebenezer is recalled,⁴¹⁶ **"he forsook his dwelling at Shiloh"** (vs 59-64). The Psalmist ends his discourse with God's selection of David and David's use of Psalms to teach the Way of God, **"he chose David ... with upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand"** (vs 65-72).

Psalm 79: This is an exilic Psalm. The Psalmist laments the destruction of Jerusalem, **"they have laid Jerusalem in ruins"**, and the plight of the people in exile, **"we have become a taunt"** (vs 1-5, 7). He pleads for retributive justice, **"pour out your anger on the nations"** (vs 6, 10, 12), and forgiveness, **"do not remember against us our former iniquities"** (vs 8-9, 11). The Psalmist ends with a pledge to preach the gospel, **"from generation to generation we will recount your praise"** (vs 13).

Psalm 80: This is an exilic Psalm. The Psalmist draws the attention of God to the plight of exiles and prays for restoration, **"give ear, O Shepherd of Israel ... restore us, O God"** (vs 1-7, 12-13, 19). The Psalmist appeals to the history of God's salvific acts, **"you brought a vine out of Egypt"** (vs 8-11) and implores God to act again on behalf of his people, **"turn again, O God of hosts ... have regard for this vine"** (vs 14-17). He ends with a commitment to live by the Way of God, **"then we shall not turn back from you"** (vs 18).

Psalm 81: typical pattern: main theme – the beneficence of God demonstrated by the Way of God, **"open your mouth wide, and I will fill it"** (vs 1-10, 14-15); contrast – apostasy of Israel, **"Israel would not submit to me"** (vs 11-12); instruction, **"Oh, that my people would listen to me"** (vs 13); summation – **"I would satisfy you"** (vs 16).

Psalm 82: This Psalm is about the Plan of God. Verse one, the **"divine council"** is at God's throne in eternity. In verses one and six, **"elohim"** should be translated **"God Family"**, **"sons of the Most High"**. Verses two, five, and seven reflect the **"human condition"**, **"like men you shall die"**. Verses three and four reflect the result of living by the Way of God, **"give justice ... rescue the weak and the needy"**. Verse eight is the realization of the Plan of God, **"you shall inherit all the nations"**.

Psalm 83: It is difficult to envision a specific historic occasion as the background of this Psalm. The actions of the **"Edomites"** at the fall of Jerusalem may have been the inspiration,⁴¹⁷ but the list of nations in verses six through eight is **a general list of enemies of Israel**. In verse one, **the Psalmist pleads with God to act**, to make the decision to intervene, **as we similarly plead today**. Verses two through five describe the actions and attitudes of the **"enemies of God"**, **those who are destroying the earth**.⁴¹⁸ Verses nine through twelve allude to some **historic victories of God**. Verses thirteen to fifteen are a general plea to deal with the enemies. Verses sixteen to eighteen look the **completion of the Plan of God** – the **"enemies"** will have been destroyed, but they will rise up in the second resurrection and learn that **"you alone, whose name is YHWH, are the Most High over all the earth"**.

Psalm 84: The Psalmist looks to the **"dwelling place of God"**, either the Tabernacle or the Temple, and longs to be there, **"blessed are those who dwell in your house"** (vs 1-4). He recounts a journey, **"each one appears before God in Zion"** (vs 5-7). He trusts God, **"blessed is the one who trusts in you"** (vs 8-9, 12). The Psalmist recognizes that the physical dwelling is just a type of actual salvation, **"YHWH bestows favor and honor"** (vs 10-11).

Psalm 85: This appears to be a post-exilic Psalm, "you restored the fortunes of Jacob" (vs 1-3). Next the Psalmist prays for improved conditions for the faithful remnant, **"Show us your hesed, O YHWH"** (vs 4-7). Then he expresses his desire to hear God's teaching, **"let me hear what the God, YHWH, will speak"** (vs 8-9). Finally, the Psalmist extols the Nature of God, **"YHWH will give what is good"** (vs 10-13).

⁴¹⁵ See 1 Kings 12:12-20

⁴¹⁶ See 1 Samuel 4:1b-11

⁴¹⁷ See Psalm 137:7

⁴¹⁸ See Revelation 11:18

Psalm 87: The Psalmist extolls Jerusalem as the “**dwelling place of God**”, “**YHWH loves the gates of Zion**” (vs 1-3). He alludes to people of the world, proud of their birthplace, “**this one was born there, they say**” (vs 4). Finally, the Psalmist expresses the same pride to be born in Jerusalem, looking to the World Tomorrow, “**YHWH records as he registers the peoples**” (vs 5-7).

Psalm 88: This is the only Psalm ascribed to “**Heman the Ezrahite**”. He was a Levitical singer appointed by David, similar to Asaph.⁴¹⁹ The superscription identifies him as a member of the Sons of Korah. The Psalm is called a “mas`kil”, so it is intended to impart “wisdom”. The word לְעֹנֹת - l`annoth, is also in the superscription. The word `annoth is from the root `anah which means “to humble”. The intent of the Psalmist may be to induce humility by the inevitability of death for all human beings. There are affinities with the thought patterns in the **Book of Job**.

The Psalmist prays earnestly, “**incline your ear to my cry**” (vs 1-2). He feels his troubles are about to take him to death, “**my life draws near to the grave**” (vs 3-9a). He prays daily, “**every day I call upon you**” (vs 9b, 13-14), but he complains that God has afflicted him, “**your wrath has swept over me**” (vs 15-18). The Psalmist briefly explores the possibility of the resurrection, “**do you work wonders for the dead**” (vs 10-12).

Psalm 89: This is the only Psalm ascribed to “**Ethan the Ezrahite**”. He was a Levitical singer appointed by David, similar to Asaph.⁴²⁰ The Psalm is called a “mas`kil”, so it is **intended to impart “wisdom”**. This is a very important Psalm. Assuming it was written by “Ethan”, a contemporary of David, it is a contemporary third-party witness to the promises given to David. **The entire Psalm is cast as a prayer to YHWH.**

The Psalmist extolls the nature of God, “**I will sing of the hesed of YHWH**” (vs 1-2, 14), then goes straight to the Messianic nature of the promises to David, “**I will establish your offspring forever**” (vs 3-4). The Psalmist looks to the throne scene in eternity, “**God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones**” (vs 5-8), then he looks to the salvific acts of God on earth, “**you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm**” (vs 9-13). The Psalmist then alludes to the Plan of God to provide salvation to those who live by the Way of God, “**Blessed are the people ... who walk, YHWH, in the light of your face**” (vs 15-18). Now the Psalmist gets to the heart of the matter – the Covenant of Messianic Descent⁴²¹ made with David, “**I have found David, my servant ... in my name shall his horn be exalted ... I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth ... I will not violate my covenant**” (vs 19-37).

At this point the nature of the Psalm changes. The remainder of the Psalm seems to reflect an exilic sitz-im-leben, “**now you have cast off and rejected ... you have renounced the covenant with your servant**” (vs 38-45). If this was section written by “Ethan”, a contemporary of David, it could only apply to the time of the Absalom rebellion; otherwise, it must be taken as an exilic addendum. Next the Psalmist takes up a familiar refrain from exilic Psalms, “**How long, YHWH? Will you hide yourself forever?**” (vs 46-48). He ends with his current plight, “**how I bear in my heart the insults of all the many nations**” (vs 49-52).

Psalm 90: This is the only Psalm ascribed to Moses. The statement in verse ten seems out of place coming from Moses, “**the years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty**” – he was eighty when he started his most important life’s work. This statement could have originated as a marginal note commenting on verse nine and the second part of verse ten.

The Psalmist looks philosophically to eternity past, “**before ... you had formed the earth and the world**” (vs 1-2); then he considers the human condition, “**you sweep them away ... like grass**” (vs 3-6). Next the Psalmist gets specific, “**we are brought to an end by your anger**” (vs 7-11) – this appears to be an allusion to Moses’ death sentence.⁴²² Finally, the Psalmist implores YHWH to deliver the appropriate instruction, “**so teach us ... that we may get a heart of wisdom**” (vs 12-17).

⁴¹⁹ See 1 Chronicles 6:31-33, 15:16-19, 16:37-42, 25:1-6, 2 Chronicles 5:12, 29:14, 35:15

⁴²⁰ See 1 Chronicles 6:44, 15:16-19

⁴²¹ For a discussion of this covenant, see section 7. *The Covenant of Descent*, in the paper “Covenants of Grace”, located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

⁴²² See Numbers 20:10-12, Deuteronomy 3:25-26, 31:2,14

Psalm 91: This Psalm is about trust in God for deliverance, “**he will deliver you ... a thousand may fall at your side ... no evil shall be allowed to befall you**” (vs 1-13). Note that verse eleven and twelve are quoted by Satan in his attempt to defeat Christ.⁴²³ The Psalm ends with a first-person statement from YHWH, “**because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him**” (vs 14-16).

Psalm 92: The superscription designates this “**A Song for the Sabbath**”. The Psalmist states the purpose of the Sabbath, “**give thanks to YHWH**” (vs 1-3). Next, he praises God for his salvific acts, “**you have exalted my horn**” (vs 4-5, 8, 10) in contrast to the fate of the wicked, “**the wicked ... are doomed to destruction forever**” (vs 6-7, 9, 11). The end-result of Sabbath keeping, “**the righteous flourish ... to declare that YHWH is upright**” (vs 12-15).⁴²⁴

Psalm 93: This brief Psalm looks to the establishment of the Kingdom of God, “**YHWH reigns ... the world is established ... holiness befits your house, YHWH, forevermore**” (vs 1-5)

Psalm 94: typical pattern: main theme – the need for retributive justice on the wicked, “**how long shall the wicked exult ... who stands up for me against evildoers**” (vs 1-7, 16-21); contrast – the Nature of God and his deliverance, “**he who teaches man knowledge ... to give him rest from days of trouble**” (vs 9-11, 13-15); instruction – “**blessed is the man whom ... you teach out of your torah**” (vs 12); summation – “**YHWH has become my stronghold ... he will bring back on them their iniquity**” (vs 22-23).

Psalm 95: A True Worshipper adjures praise of YHWH, “**make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation**” (vs 1-3, 6-7a). He appeals to the creation to validate the greatness of God, “**the sea is his, for he made it**” (vs 4-5). He implores True Worshipers to learn the lessons recorded from the past, “**today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts**” (vs 7b-11.)

Psalm 96: A True Worshipper adjures the preaching of the gospel, “**tell of his salvation from day to day ... declare his glory among the nations**” (vs 1-6). He looks to the World Tomorrow when all will worship the True God, “**worship YHWH in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth**” (vs 7-9). He looks to the establishment of the Kingdom of God, “**YHWH reigns ... yes, the world is established ... he will judge the world in righteousness**” (vs 10-13).

Psalm 97: The Psalmist looks to the establishment of the Kingdom of God, “**YHWH reigns, let the earth rejoice**” (vs 1), which is inaugurated by the Second Advent, “**the mountains melt like wax before YHWH ... all the peoples see his glory**” (vs 2-7). All people will learn the Way of God, “**the daughters of Judah rejoice, because of your mish^epatim**” (vs 8-9). The Psalmist adjures True Worshiper to remain faithful, “**you who love YHWH, hate evil**” (vs 10-12).

Psalm 98: The Psalmist rejoices at the revelation of salvation, “**YHWH has made known his salvation**” (vs 1-2a), the Plan of God is unfolding, “**he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations**” (vs 2b-3). All the earth will worship, “**make a joyful noise to YHWH, all the earth**” (vs 4-6). Even the creation will celebrate, “**let the hills sing for joy together before YHWH**” (vs 7-9).

Psalm 99: The Psalmist rejoices at the unfolding of the Plan of God, “**YHWH reigns ... the King in his might loves justice ... you have established equity**” (vs 1-5). He alludes to past salvific events, the wilderness generation, “**kept his testimonies and the statute that he gave them**” (vs 6-7). Only the True God is worthy of worship, “**exalt YHWH our God ... for YHWH our God is holy**” (vs 8-9).

Psalm 100: The Psalmist implores worshipful service to God, “**serve YHWH with gladness**” (vs 1-2, 4), because of his beneficent nature, “**know that YHWH, he is God ... his hesed endures forever**” (vs 3, 5).

Psalm 102: The Psalmist prays earnestly lamenting his current state, “**my heart is struck down like grass and has withered**” (vs 1-11, 23) – he is among the exiles longing to return to Jerusalem to worship YHWH, “**for your servants hold her stones dear**” (vs 12-14). The Plan of God will unfold, “**nations will fear the name of YHWH**” (vs 15-17), the gospel will be promulgated, “**let this be recorded for a**

⁴²³ See Matthew 4:6, Luke 4:10-11

⁴²⁴ For further discussion of this Psalm, see section [4.2 The Sabbath](#), in the paper “[The Human Condition](#)”, located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

generation to come” (vs 18-21), and the Kingdom of God will be established, **“when peoples gather together, and kingdoms, to worship YHWH”** (vs 22). Finally, the Psalmist prays for God to complete his Plan of Salvation, **“your servants ... offspring shall be established before you”** (vs 24-28).

Psalm 104: From start to finish this is a Psalm of praise to God for his greatness exhibited by the creation (vs 1-35). **This is the first of the** הַלְלוּ יְהוָה - **hal’lu yah Psalms** (vs 35).⁴²⁵

Psalm 105: This Psalm is an elucidation of **God’s purpose for the Nation of Israel**.⁴²⁶ That purpose has currently fallen to the New Testament Church and will revert to the New Israel in the World Tomorrow. The Psalmist starts off praising YHWH, **“Oh give thanks to YHWH; call upon his name”** and adjuring True Worshipers to proclaim the gospel, **“make known his deeds among the peoples”** (vs 1-6). He then extolls the Nature of God, **“he remembers his covenant forever”** (vs 7-11). Then he proceeds with a review of the **beneficence of God in dealing with Israel** to accomplish his purpose: the patriarchs, **“touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm”** (vs 12-15); Joseph in Egypt, **“he made him lord of his house ... to teach his elders wisdom”** (vs 16-22); Israel in Egypt, **“YHWH made his people very fruitful”** (vs 23-25); Moses and the Exodus, **“he brought out Israel with silver and gold”** (vs 26-38); the wilderness wandering and the conquest, **“he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham, his servant”** (vs 39-44). The Psalmist ends with the purpose of God for True Worshipers, **“they might keep his statutes and observe his torah”** (vs 45a), **“praise YHWH”** (vs 45b).

Psalm 106: This appears to be a **post-exilic Psalm**, largely modelled after Psalm 105, **“Save us, YHWH our God, and gather us from among the nations”** (vs 40-41, 47). The Psalmist starts off praising God and stating his purpose, **“who can utter the mighty deeds of YHWH, or declare all his praise”** (vs 1-5). Then he commences his historical survey by stating the constant of the human condition, **“both we and our fathers have sinned”** (v 6). **His survey is topical** – he alludes to many incidents from the Exodus to the conquest, briefly touching on the periods of the judges and the kings, ending in the captivity, **“their enemies oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their power”** (vs 7-43). Finally, he alludes to the current state of the remnant community and adjures commitment, **“that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise”** (vs 44-48a), **“praise YHWH”** (vs 48b).

Psalm 107: **This Psalm has a complicated structure:** the main part comprises **four stanzas each with a recurring theme**. The ESV translators have supplied the word “some” at the beginning of each stanza. Each stanza commences with a statement of persons in some adverse condition (the historical allusions are obscure):

- Some wandered in desert wastes (vs 4a)
- Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death (vs 10a)
- Some were fools through their sinful ways (vs 17a)
- Some went down to the sea in ships (vs 23a)

Each stanza then elaborates on the distress of the persons resulting in their petitioning YHWH, **“then they cried to YHWH in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress”** (vs 6, 13, 19, 28). In each stanza the beneficence of YHWH is differently described, and the persons are adjured, **“let them thank YHWH for his *hesed*, for his wondrous works to the children of man”** (vs 8, 15, 21, 31). Each stanza ends with a further elaboration of the beneficence of YHWH.

The objective of the Psalm is largely prophetic – God will accomplish the execution of his Plan of Salvation. The Psalmist starts off extolling the Nature of God, **“Oh give thanks to YHWH, for he is good, for his *hesed* endures forever”** and adjuring **“the redeemed”**, True Worshipers, to **“say so”**, i.e., proclaim the gospel (vs 1-2). **Verse three is clearly an allusion to the prophecies of the Second Exodus**⁴²⁷ which suggests that the purpose of the Psalmist in the four main stanzas is to epitomize the difficulties of the returnees. After the four main stanzas, the Psalmist returns to prophecies of the Second Exodus, **“he turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water”** (vs 33-

⁴²⁵ See also Psalms 105:45, 106:48, 111:1, 112:1, 113:1,9, 115:18, 116:19, 117:1,2, 135:1,3,21, 146:1,10, 147:1,20, 148:1,7,14, 149:1,9, 150:1,6

⁴²⁶ See Exodus 19:5-6, 34:10, Deuteronomy 4:5-8, 7:6

⁴²⁷ See the Bible Study Notes, **“The Remnant & the Second Exodus”**, located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

35),⁴²⁸ and conditions in the New Israel, **“by his blessing they multiply greatly”** (vs 36-38). The Psalmist ends with a brief contrast of retributive justice versus the treatment of True Worshipers, **“he raises up the needy out of affliction”** and adjures True Worshipers to take heed, **“whoever is wise, let him attend to these things”** (vs 39-43).

Psalm 111: The theme of this Psalm is the greatness of God as demonstrated by his salvific acts, **“great are the works of YHWH”** (vs 2-9). The Nature of God is extolled, **“YHWH is gracious and merciful”** (vs 3b, 4b, 5b, 7, 8b). The Psalmist commits to understand and teach the Way of God, **“in the company of the upright, in the congregation”** (vs 1, 2b, 9). Verse ten is an introduction to the next group of Psalms – which define wisdom, culminating in Psalm 119, **“the fear of YHWH is the beginning of wisdom”**.

Psalm 112: This Psalm deals with living by the Way of God, **“blessed is the man who fears YHWH, who greatly delights in his commandments”** (vs 1b-9). The outcome of living by the Way of God is to take on the Nature of God, **“he is gracious, merciful, and righteous”** (vs 4b, 5b). Ultimately, at the resurrection he will **“triumph on his adversaries”**, **“the wicked”** (vs 9b 10).

Psalm 113: This Psalm extolls the Nature of God, **“who is like YHWH our God, who is seated on high”** (vs 1-9). The Psalmist looks to the establishment of the Kingdom of God, **“from the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of YHWH is to be praised”** (vs 3-4, 9). He looks to the first resurrection, **“he raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap”** (vs 7-8).

Psalm 114: This brief Psalm alludes to some events of the Exodus, **“when Israel went out from Egypt”** (vs 1-8), to make the point that the whole earth will again **“tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord”** (vs 7) at the Second Advent.

Psalm 115: This Psalm contrasts the way of the world, **“why should the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’”** with the Way of God, **“our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases”** (vs 1-8). The Psalmist adjures True Worshipers to trust God, **“you who fear YHWH, trust in YHWH”** (vs 9-11); he will provide his blessings, **“YHWH has remembered us; he will bless us”** (vs 12-16), culminating in the resurrection, **“we will bless YHWH from this time forth and forevermore”** (vs 17-18).

Psalm 116: The Psalmist, as a True Worshiper, pours out his heart to God, **“YHWH, I am your servant ... I love YHWH, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy”** (vs 1-2, 16). The Psalmist laments the human condition, **“the snares of death encompassed me”** (vs 3-4, 10-11), but due to the Nature of God, **“gracious is YHWH, and righteous; our God is merciful”** (vs 5-7), he trusts in salvation, **“I will walk before YHWH in the land of the living”** (vs 8-9). The Psalmist commits to proclaiming the Way of God, **“I will pay my vows to YHWH in the presence of all his people”** (vs 15-19).

Psalm 117: This brief Psalm praises God for divine nature, **“great is his *hesed* toward us”**, and looks to the time when all people will worship the True God, **“extol him, all peoples”** (vs 1-2).

Psalm 118: The Psalmist starts and ends by extolling the Nature of God, **“his *hesed* endures forever”** (vs 1-4, 28-29); then he enjoins trust in God, **“it is better to take refuge in YHWH than to trust in man”** (vs 5-9). Verses ten through thirteen appear to recall some actual battle situation, but they can also be taken metaphorically, **“I was pushed hard, so that I was falling, but YHWH helped me”** (vs 10-16). The Psalmist looks to the resurrection, **“I shall not die, but I shall live”** (vs 17-21). Finally, the Psalmist provides Messianic prophecies, **“the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone”**⁴²⁹ and **“blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD”**⁴³⁰ (vs 22-27).

Psalm 119: This Psalm is a complete acrostic: each “stanza” comprises eight “verses” each of which starts with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet; all letters are used in the correct order. **The theme of the Psalm is the teaching of God, the *torah*.** Each verse of the Psalm in some way relates to the teaching of God. Each of the stanzas elaborates a specific theme, such as the Way of God – see the **“Chart – Analysis of Non-Davidic Psalms”**.

⁴²⁸ See Isaiah 35:1-10, 40:3-5, 41:17-20, 43:18-21

⁴²⁹ See Isaiah 28:16, Mark 12:10–11 // (Matthew 21:42, Luke 20:17), Acts 4:11, Ephesians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:4–7

⁴³⁰ See Mark 11:9 // (Matthew 21:9, Luke 19:38), Matthew 23:39, Luke 13:35

Psalm 120: This is the first Psalm designated “a song of ascents” – ascents is from מַעֲלֶה - ma’alah, which carries a range of meaning including “step”, “stair”, “step path”, “way up”. There is no obvious reason why the Psalms are called “songs of ascents”.⁴³¹

The Psalmist is in distress, “In my distress I called to YHWH and he answered me” (vs 1-4), because he is sojourning among warlike people, “I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war” (vs 5-7).

Psalm 121: The Psalmist looks vainly to the hills, “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?” (vs 1), but realizes only God can deliver, “my help comes from YHWH” (vs 2-8).

Psalm 123: The Psalmist looks to God for communal mercy, “our eyes look to YHWH our God, till he has mercy upon us” (vs 1-3a). He laments the contempt of the proud, “we have had more than enough of contempt” (vs 3b-4).

Psalm 125: The Psalmist trusts God for protection, “YHWH surrounds his people” (vs 1-2, 4, 5b) from the wicked, “the scepter of wickedness shall not rest” (vs 3, 5a).

Psalm 126: The Psalmist express joy at returning to Jerusalem, “when YHWH restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream” (vs 1-3), and prays for God’s beneficence, “reap with shouts of joy ... bringing his sheaves” vs 4-6)

Psalm 127: Only God can truly provide, “Unless YHWH builds ... watches ... children are a heritage from YHWH” (vs 1-5).

Psalm 128: Blessings from living the Way of God, “blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways” (vs1-6)

Psalm 129: The Psalmist laments the affliction of Israel, “greatly have they afflicted me from my youth—let Israel now say” (vs 1-3). He prays for protection from enemies, “may all who hate Zion be put to shame and turned backward” (vs 4-8).

Psalm 130: The Psalmist prays for mercy, “with you there is forgiveness” (vs 1-4) and for hope “O Israel, hope in YHWH” (vs 5-8).

Psalm 132: The Psalmist recalls David’s desire to build a temple, “I find a place for YHWH, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob” (vs 1-7). Then he recounts the promises to David, “their sons also forever shall sit on your throne” (vs 8-12). Finally, he recalls God’s selection of Jerusalem, “this is my resting place forever; here I will dwell” (vs 13-18)

Psalm 134: This brief Psalm is an invocation to “blessing” by True Worshipers in the Temple, presumably arrived for a Feast, “bless YHWH, all you servants of YHWH, who stand by night in the house of YHWH” (vs 1-3).

Psalm 135: **typical pattern:** main theme – the greatness of God, “praise the name of YHWH ... whatever YHWH pleases, he does” (vs 1-7); contrast – God has defeated the world, “he it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt ... those who make [idols] become like them, so do all who trust in them” (vs 8-12, 15-18); instruction – “YHWH will vindicate his people” (vs 13-14); summation – “you who fear YHWH, bless YHWH” (vs 19-21).

Psalm 136: This Psalm has a unique structure – every “verse” contains the refrain “for his hesed endures forever”; so, the main theme of the Psalm is the **Nature of God**, “give thanks to YHWH, for he is good” (vs 1-3). It appears to be a post-exilic Psalm, “it is he who remembered us in our low estate ... and rescued us from our foes” (vs 23-26). The three main “stanzas” recount salvific acts of God: the creation, “who by understanding made the heavens” (vs 4-9); the Exodus, “overthrew Pharaoh and his host in Yam Suph” (vs 10-16); the conquest, “gave their land as a heritage ... a heritage to Israel his servant” (vs 17-22).

Psalm 137: This the classic Psalm of the exile, “by the waters of Babylon” (vs 1-3). The Psalmist uses “Jerusalem” in metonymy for living by the Way of God, “if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy”

⁴³¹ See Harrison page 980, KD5 pages 749-751
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(vs 4-6). Finally, the Psalmist prays for **retributive justice** against past treachery, **“remember, O YHWH, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem”**, and in the future, **“O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed”** (vs 7-9).

Psalm 146: The Psalmist praises God, **“YHWH will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations”** (vs 1-2, 10). The way of the world avails nothing, **“put not your trust in princes”**, (vs3-4). Trust in the Creator, **“blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob ... who made heaven and earth”** (vs 5-7a). God watches over those he calls, **“YHWH lifts up those who are bowed down; YHWH loves the righteous”** (vs7b-9).

Psalm 147: This Psalm comprises three “stanzas” each with a similar structure. Each “stanza” commences with praise for God, **“praise YHWH! For it is good to sing praises to our God”** (vs 1, 7, 12). Each “stanza” explores concepts such as the Nature of God, **“great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure”** (vs 5, 10, 15), and the beneficence of God, **“he makes peace in your borders; he fills you with the finest of the wheat”** (vs 2-3, 13-14). Each “stanza” explores General Revelation, **“he determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names”** (vs 4, 8-9, 16-18). Finally, each “stanza” ends with living by the Way of God, **“YHWH takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his *hesed*”** (vs 6, 11, 19-20).

Psalm 148: This Psalm extolls all the creation to praise God, **“praise him, all his angels ... praise him, all you shining stars ... beasts and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds”** (vs 1-10). It Looks to the establishment of the Kingdom of God when all people will praise God, **“kings of the earth and all peoples ... let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted”** (vs 11-14).

Psalm 149: This Psalm is prophetic of the Second Advent, **“for YHWH (Jesus Christ) takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation”** (vs 4). The resurrected saints will sing a song of praise,⁴³² **“sing to [Jesus Christ] a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly (the Church)”** (vs 1-3). Jesus Christ will execute retributive justice to the nations,⁴³³ and the resurrected saints will teach the Way of God to all the world, **“let the godly exult in glory ... let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords⁴³⁴ in their hands ... his is honor for all his godly ones”** (vs 5-9).

Psalm 150: The Psalter finishes with praise of God, **“praise YHWH ... let everything that has breath praise YHWH ... *hal’lu yah*”** (vs 1-6).

⁴³² See Revelation 15:3-4, 19:1-5

⁴³³ See Revelation 11:16-18, 16:1-21, 19:11-21

⁴³⁴ This is a metaphor, see Hebrews 4:12, Revelation 1:16, 2:12, 19:15

Chart – Analysis of Non-Davidic Psalms

Psalm	Ascription	The Way of God, proclaiming it, living it, teaching it	The wicked, enemies	The Nature of God	Retributive Justice	Prophecy, Theophany	The universal nature of God's dominion	Trust in God, deliverance	Singing, Praying, Praising God	Historical allusion	Eternity, Eternal life	Salvation, World Tomorrow	Human condition in relation to God - repentance	General revelation	The resurrection	Exile, remnant
Ps1	none	v1-3,6a	v4-5,6b													
Ps2	none		v1-3	v4,12b	v5	v6-9	v8,10-12a	v12c								
Ps10	none		v2-11,13	v1,5b	v15,18b		v16	v12,14, 17-18a								
Ps33	none			v4-5			v8,10-15	v12,16-22	v1-3	v6-7,9	v13-14a	v8		v6-7,9		
Ps42	Sons of Korah	v8a						v11b	v8b-10			v11b	v1-6a,7b, 9-11a	v6b-7a		
Ps43	none		v1,2b					v1-5				v3-4,5b	v2,5a			
Ps44	Sons of Korah	v17-18	v10,13-14,16	v21,26b				v4-8,23-26		v1-3,9-14, 19	v8b	v4	v15,22,25			v9-14, 17-20
Ps45	Sons of Korah	v10-11		v6b-7a	v5	v3-6a,9b	v6a,17		v1-9			v12-17				
Ps46	Sons of Korah					v2-6,8-10	v10	v1-2a,7,11				v9-10				
Ps47	Sons of Korah					v1-9	v1-3,7a, 8-9		v1,6,7b	v3-4		v1-9				
Ps48	Sons of Korah	v12-14		v9-11		v1-8			v1a							
Ps49	Sons of Korah	v1-4,7-9	v5-6						v4b		v9		v10-14a, 14b,16-20		v14ba,15	
Ps50	Asaph	v14,23a	v16-20	v2-3, 6-13	v21-22		v1	v15				v23b			v4-5	
Ps67	none	v3,5,7					v2-7		v1-7			v2,4,7b		v6a		
Ps71	none	v15-18,24a	v4,10-11	v19,22a,β	v13,24b			v1-14	v1-24			v15			v20-21	
Ps72	Solomon			v1,12-14			v8-11,17,19b	v12-14	v18-20		v7,17, 19aa		v1-7,14-16			
Ps73	Asaph	v15,28b	v3b-12	v1	v18-20,27			v28a			v26		v2-3a,13-17, 21-25		v24b	
Ps74	Asaph		v3b-8,18, 22b-23	v12	v10-11	v9		v19-20a, 21-22a		v3b-8, 13-17				v13-17		v1-3a,9, 20b
Ps75	Asaph	V1,9		v6-7	v4-5,6-8, 10a	v2-8	v3		v1a,9			v10b				
Ps76	Asaph	v11		v1-2,4a, 7,12	v8	v9-10	v12			V3-6		v9				
Ps77	Asaph	v11-12		v7-10, 13-14		v17-18	v14b			v15-20			v1-6			v7-9
Ps78	Asaph	v1-8,72		v21, 38-39						v9-72			v22,34-37, 41-42,56-58			

<u>Psalm</u>	Ascription	<u>The Way of God, proclaiming it, living it, teaching it</u>	The wicked, enemies	<u>The Nature of God</u>	Retributive Justice	Prophecy, Theophany	The universal nature of God's dominion	Trust in God, deliverance	Singing, Praying, Praising God	Historical allusion	Eternity, Eternal life	Salvation, World Tomorrow	Human condition in relation to God - repentance	General revelation	The resurrection	Exile, remnant
Ps79	Asaph	v13		v5,8b	v6,10,12			v9b		v1-3,7		v9a	v8-9,11			v1-5,7, 10-11
Ps80	Asaph	v18	v13,16a	v1-2	v16b			1-3,7, 14-15, 17,19	v1-19	v8-13,16			v4-6			v4-6, 12-13,16
Ps81	Asaph	v3-5a,8-10, 13		v10b	v14-15			v16	v1-3	v4-7,10a, 11-12		v13-16				
Ps82	Asaph	v3-4				v5b	v8				v1,6		v2,5a,7			
Ps83	Asaph		v2-8		v1,9-17		v18		v1-18	v9-12						
Ps84	Sons of Korah	v1-2,3b-5,10		v11				v8-9,12	v1-12	v6-7				v3a		
Ps85	Sons of Korah	v8		v4b-5,7a, 10-13					v1-7	v1-3		v4a,7b,9				v4-7
Ps87	Sons of Korah			v2		v3,5-6			v1-7	v1		v5-6	v4			
Ps88	Heman			v11					v1-18			v1a	v3-9,14-18		v10-12	
Ps89	Ethan	v15-18	v22-23, 50-51	v1-2, 8, 13-14, 24a,49		v4,24-37		v18	v1-52	v3-4,10, 19-23, 38-45	v5-7		v46-51	v9,11-12	v15-18,48	
Ps90	Moses	v12		v1-2,4, 13-14					v1-17				v3,5-11, 15-17			
Ps91	none				v8			v1-7,9-13				v14-16				
Ps92	none	v1-4,15	v6-7a	v2,5,8	v7b,9,11				v1-15			v10,12-14				
Ps93	none			v4b-5								v1-2		v3-4		
Ps94	none	v12,15	v3-8, 20-21	v1,9-11, 18b,19b	v1-2,13b,23			v14,22	v1-7				v11-13a, 16-19			
Ps95	none	v7-9,10b,11b		v3-5, 10a,11a					v1-2,6	v8-11		v1b,3		v4-5		
Ps96	none	v2b-3,7-10	v5a	v4,6			v9b-10,13		v1-13			v10,13		v5b,11-12		
Ps97	none	v7b-8,10a		v2	v3,7a	v3-5	v4-5,6b,9	v10b	v12			v1,4-5,9		v6a	v11	
Ps98	none			v2b-3a		v3a	v2b,4a,7b, 9		v1aα,4-6			v1aβ-2a, 3b,6b,9		v7-8		
Ps99	none	v5a,7b,9a		v4,5b,8,9b		v1-5	v1aβ,2b		v5,9	v6-7		v1-5		v1bβ		
Ps100	none	v2-3		v3a,5			v1b		v1,2b,4							
Ps102	one afflicted	v18,21,28	v8	v13,17, 24b, 26-27		v18b	v15,22		v1-14,17, 24-28			v12,15-16, 19-22	v3-11,23	v25-26		v13-14
Ps104	none			v1b-2a, 24a, 30-32	v35a				v1-15, 20-30, 33-34,35b				v23	v2b-22, 24b-29		
Ps105	none	v1b,2b,3b-6, 42,45a		v7-11		v15	v7	v19	v1-6,45b	v6,9-44						

Psalm	Ascription	The Way of God, proclaiming it, living it, teaching it	The wicked, enemies	The Nature of God	Retributive Justice	Prophecy, Theophany	The universal nature of God's dominion	Trust in God, deliverance	Singing, Praying, Praising God	Historical allusion	Eternity, Eternal life	Salvation, World Tomorrow	Human condition in relation to God - repentance	General revelation	The resurrection	Exile, remnant
Ps106	none	v2-3,12		v1b,7bα,45				v12,31	v1a,4-7,48	v7-43			v6			v6,44-47
Ps107	none	v22,32,41-43		v1b,9,16, 20,29	v40	v3,33-38		v6,13,19,28	v1a,8,15, 21,31	v4-31		v2-3	v4,10,17, 23,39			
Ps111	none	v1b-2,10		v2-9					v1a,10b			v9				
Ps112	none	v1b-9	v10a		v8b,10b				v1a		v3b,9b					
Ps113	none			v4-6		v3,9	v4a	v7-8	v1-9			v2a,3			v7	
Ps114	none						v7			v1-8				v4-6		
Ps115	none	v12-15	v2,4-8	v1,3				v9-11	v1,18				v16-17		v17-18	
Ps116	none	v1-2,12-19a	v11b	v5-7,15				v6,8-9	v1,16-19			v13	v3-4,10-11		v8-9	
Ps117	none			v2a			v1		v1,2b							
Ps118	none	v17b,19-21, 27		v1-4, 29b		v22-26		v5-9,13	v1-4,14-16, 28-29			v14-15a	v10-13,17-18		v17-21	
Ps119	none	v1-8, 9-16, 33-40, 57-64, 65-72, 97-104, 129-136	v21,23a, 42a,51a, 53,61a, 69a,70a, 78a,84-85 ,87a,95a, 110a,115a, 118-119a ,134a,150, 155,157a, 158,161a	v64a, 75-77, 88a, 89-96, 124a, 132, 137-144 ,149,156				v17-24, 49-56, 73-80, 113-120, 145-152, 153-160, 169-176	v7a,54, 171-172		v105-112	v25-32, 41-48, 81-88, 121-128, 161-168		v90b-91		
Ps120	Ascents		v2b-3		v4			v1-2	v1-7				v5-7			
Ps121	Ascents							v1-8	v1-8							
Ps123	Ascents	v2		v1b,3a					v1-4				v3b-4			
Ps125	Ascents		v3	v4	v5a			v1-2,5b	v1-5							
Ps126	Ascents							v4-6	v1-6							v1-3
Ps127	Ascents / Solomon	v1-5							v1-5							
Ps128	Ascents	v1-6							v1-6							
Ps129	Ascents		v8b	v4a	v4b-8a				v1-8				v1-3			
Ps130	Ascents			v2-4,7b				v5-7a,8	v1-8				v1			
Ps132	Ascents				v18	v8-17			v1-18	v1-7						
Ps134	Ascents						v3		v1-3							
Ps135	none		v15-18	v5-7,13			v6	v14	v1-3,19-21	v4,8-12				v7		
Ps136	none			v1-26			v25		v1-3,26	v10-22				v4-9		v23-24
Ps137	none				v7-9			v4-6								v1-6
Ps146	none			v6b-9			v10a	v5	v1-210b				v3-4	v6a		
Ps147	none	v6a,11, 19-20a		v5,10,15	v6b	v2-3,13-15	v15		v1,7,12, 20b	v13a				v4,8-9, 16-18		v2

<u>Psalm</u>	Ascription	<u>The Way of God</u> , proclaiming it, living it, teaching it	The wicked, enemies	<u>The Nature of God</u>	Retributive Justice	Prophecy, Theophany	The universal nature of God's dominion	Trust in God, deliverance	Singing, Praying, Praising God	Historical allusion	Eternity, Eternal life	Salvation, World Tomorrow	Human condition in relation to God - repentance	General revelation	The resurrection	Exile, remnant
Ps148	none					v13-14a	v11-12		v1-14			v13-14a		v3-10		
Ps149	none				v7-9aα	v6b,9aβ			v1-6a,9b			v4-5a			v4	
Ps150	none			v2			v6a		v1-6							
<u>count:</u>		44	25	52	27	23	29	35	58	23	6	33	28	21	11	11

This chart is available as a Spread Sheet at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

Excursus 8 – *torah* and *nomos*⁴³⁵

The translation of the Old Testament into Greek, which we call the Septuagint, seems to have been commenced in early third century BC with the five Books of Moses. Other books were added in subsequent decades.⁴³⁶ In this translation, the Jewish translators chose to use the Greek word νόμος – *nomos* as a translation of *torah*. The English word “law” carries pretty much the same range of meaning as *nomos*; whereas *torah* means “teaching”, “instruction”, “direction”.⁴³⁷ **Why did the Jewish translators choose *nomos* to translate *torah*?**

H. Kleinknecht states:

νόμος ... has the sense of “what is proper”, “what is assigned to someone”. In ancient times it has a comprehensive range of meaning which embraces any kind of existing or accepted norm, order, usage, or tradition. Νόμος is what is valid and in use ... The concept is religious in origin ... to honour the gods ... by participating in ... worship ... (TDNT IV pages 1023-1024)

So, **the origin of the word *nomos* is in the realm of pagan religious worship**. Kleinknecht goes on to explain the development of the usage of the word. It came “into **specialized use in the judicial sphere**”, extending to “the **law of nature**” and “**moral law**”. By the fifth century BC, *nomos* began to be written down and a sense of “**written law**” began to develop. This provided “a fixed expression of legal order and **the national constitution in a democratic polis**”. But the religious connotations of the word always remained:

This philosophical theory became a historical reality under Hellenism. Here νόμος no longer rules as king in the *polis*. The will and person of the [king] has itself become νόμος. ... **The divine king is the new divine source of νόμος** ... (TDNT IV page 1032)

This is the environment in which in Jewish translators of the Septuagint worked. In the Persian and Greek periods, **the Jewish community centered in Jerusalem had been under relentless pressure to conform to the pagan world around them**. This drove the community in two directions: some were readily willing to assimilate to pagan ways; **others strove bitterly to defend the traditional ways**. Among those defending the traditional ways there was a desire to convince the pagan world that **Israel’s traditions were older and superior**. In fact, they asserted, Israel’s scriptures contained the essence of all Greek philosophy and learning. This tendency reached its epitome in **Philo of Alexandria** at the time of Christ. Given this, **the translators wanted the Greek world to think of Israel’s *torah* as the same as the pagan *nomos***. They were trying to conform the Truth of God to the lies of the world.

To understand this process, we need to **briefly sketch the course of events from the exile to the inception of the New Testament Church**. We have a very well-defined starting point: **the work of Ezekiel**. Ezekiel’s purpose in captivity was to bring to repentance those individuals among the captive community that God was calling to return to Promised Land as a remnant of True Worshipers to prepare for the First Advent. In the New Testament we find **the last of this remnant community** alive and well and prepared for the First Advent – thousands were readily converted and quickly formed the nucleus of the New Testament Church. During the **five hundred years** between these events, we have **very little information and many dark periods**.

God’s purpose in re-establishing the community in the Promised Land was to **prepare for the First Advent**. There had to be a community in which the Messiah could live as a human being and there had to be within this community a group of True Worshipers to nurture the Messiah as a child. Jeremiah records **YHWH’s words to the exile community** explaining God’s intentions for them:

For thus says the LORD: When **seventy years are completed for Babylon**, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and **bring you back to this place**. For I know **the plans I have for you**, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you **a future and a hope**. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. (Jeremiah 29:10-12 ESV)

⁴³⁵ This excursus is copied from the paper “True Worship of the True God” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

⁴³⁶ See Schürer II,3,pages 159-164

⁴³⁷ See **Excursus 3 – *torah*** in the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

God worked with the entire returning community to get it re-established.⁴³⁸ After the temple was completed, the community fell into degeneracy. This is the situation depicted in the Book of Malachi. To remedy this, God sent Nehemiah and Ezra. They were successful. Some points to consider for this period:

- **Nehemiah** was a **civil governor**, there is sketchy information on a few governors after him
- **Ezra** was a **priest and a scribe**: scribism was a new concept – it involved full time, systematic, study and maintenance of the sacred writings⁴³⁹
- **Ezra** successfully re-established the **formal worship of YHWH in the temple** with a complete temple service, including educating the people in *torah*
- In the years after the work of Nehemiah and Ezra, **the civil governorship ceased**, and the **priests gained political control** while **independent scribes who were NOT priests** became more and more important as teachers⁴⁴⁰

We have a period of about one hundred years between the reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra and the conquest of Alexander – **the dark years of the Persian period**. There is little or no first-hand information on the affairs of the community during this period.⁴⁴¹ For the next hundred and fifty years, from the **conquest of Alexander** until the **Maccabean revolt**, there is much richer information the influence of Hellenism on the community; but again, there is **little direct information on the community**.⁴⁴²

By the time of Christ, the “**Pharisees**” were the **undisputed thought leaders** of the Jewish community. The origins of the Pharisees are obscure.⁴⁴³ The most likely origin is a group called the “**Hasidim**” who fought along with the Maccabees in the early stages of the rebellion, but completely withdrew their support when the objectives of the Maccabees became political.⁴⁴⁴

The word חַסִּידִים - *hasidim* is the plural of חַסִּיד - *hasid*, “godly”, “saints”⁴⁴⁵ **a word that David had established as an epithet of True Worshipers**, for example:

But know that the LORD has set apart **the godly (hasid)** for himself ... (Psalm 4:3a ESV)

With **the merciful (hasid)** you show yourself merciful;

with **the blameless** man you show yourself blameless;

with **the purified** you show yourself pure ... (Psalm 18:25-26a ESV)

Turn away from evil and do good; **so shall you dwell forever**.

For the LORD loves [mish^epat]; he will not forsake **his saints (hasid)**.

They are **preserved forever** ... (Psalm 37:27-28ba ESV)

All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all **your saints (hasid)** shall bless you!

They shall speak of the **glory of your kingdom** and tell of your power,

to **make known to the children of man** your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. ...

The LORD is **righteous** in all his ways and kind in all his works.

The LORD is near to all **who call on him**, to all who call on him **in truth**.

He fulfills the desire of **those who fear him**; he also hears their cry and **saves them**.

(Psalm 145:10-12, 17-19 ESV)

Later Palmists continued to use the word *hasid* to identify True Worshipers:

O God, the nations have come into your inheritance;

they have defiled your holy temple; they have **laid Jerusalem in ruins**.

They have given the bodies of **your servants** to the birds of the heavens for food,

the flesh of **your faithful (hasid)** to the beasts of the earth. (Psalm 79:1-2 ESV)

Show us your [hesed], O LORD, and **grant us your salvation**.

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,

⁴³⁸ This was discussed in section **9.8 Exilic and Post-exilic Feast Keeping** of the paper “**True Worship of the True God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca. See especially the discussion of the prophecy in the second chapter of Haggai.

⁴³⁹ See Schürer II,1,pages 306-328

⁴⁴⁰ See Schürer II,2,pages 29-43

⁴⁴¹ See Bruce (Nations) pages 107-115, Bright pages 405-412

⁴⁴² See Bruce (Nations) pages 116-139, Bright pages 412-422

⁴⁴³ See Schürer II,2,pages 10-28, and Bruce (NT) pages 69-81

⁴⁴⁴ See Schürer II,2,pages 26, and Bruce (NT) pages 69-70

⁴⁴⁵ See **TWOT** article 698b page 307

for he will speak **peace to his people, to his saints (hasid)**; but let them not turn back to folly. Surely his salvation is near to **those who fear him**, that glory may dwell in our land. (Psalm 85:7-9 ESV)

O **you who love the LORD**, hate evil!
He preserves the lives of his saints (hasid); he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
 Light is sown for **the righteous**, and joy for **the upright in heart**. (Psalm 97:10-11 ESV)

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints (hasid). (Psalm 116:15 ESV)

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted;
 his majesty is above earth and heaven.
 He has raised up a horn for **his people**, praise for **all his saints (hasid)**,
 for the people of Israel **who are near to him**. Praise the LORD! (Psalm 148:13-14 ESV)

Praise the LORD!
 Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in **the assembly of the godly (hasid)**! ...
 For the LORD takes pleasure in **his people**; he adorns **the humble** with salvation.
 Let **the godly (hasid)** exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. ...
This is honor for all his godly ones (hasid). Praise the LORD! (Psalm 149:1, 4-5, 9b ESV)

The existence of a group of True Worshipers at the end of the Nehemiah-Ezra period is affirmed in the Book of Malachi:

Then **those who feared the LORD** spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a **book of remembrance** was written before him of **those who feared the LORD** and **esteemed his name**. "**They shall be mine**, says the LORD of hosts, **in the day** when I make up **my treasured possession**, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more **you shall see the distinction between the righteous** and the wicked, between **one who serves God** and one who does not serve him. ..." (Malachi 3:16-17 ESV)

So clearly the "Hasidim" were originally the True Worshipers of God. By the time of the Maccabean revolt, the "Hasidim" **still believed themselves to be "True Worshipers"**. However, the facts suggest that at some point True Worshipers had separated from the group known as "Hasidim". By the time of John Hyrcanus, a generation after the Maccabean revolt, the "Hasidim", now identified as Pharisees, appear in full-blown colour, i.e., espousing their interpretations of the *torah*.⁴⁴⁶

The **Pharisees** were less influenced by the Septuagint than Jews of the Diaspora because they continued to use the Hebrew text. However, **the notion of the equivalence of *nomos* with *torah* was apparently pervasive** as they completely lost all true perspective on the meaning of the *torah*. The **Pharisaic interpretations frequently ignore obvious teaching and delve into obscure abstractions**. Jesus constantly condemned the Pharisees' interpretations.⁴⁴⁷ The Pharisees were so opposed to Jesus because they believed themselves to be the True Remnant, the only True Worshipers of God, and they believed their interpretations were the only path to true righteousness and salvation.

The other extreme is represented by **Philo of Alexandria**. He was a Jew of the Diaspora who was **fully educated in Greek philosophy and learning**. He used the Septuagint as his Bible not the Hebrew text – unquestioningly accepting the equivalence of *nomos* and *torah*. He wrote extensively to demonstrate that the Old Testament was in fact the source of all philosophy and true learning.⁴⁴⁸ **Philo used the technique of "allegory"**, which was common at that time. The problem with "allegory" is that it ignores the literal meaning of a text and applies **subjective symbolic meaning**. This renders most of Philo's works more or less useless today. His problem was his acceptance of Greek philosophy, much of which is diametrically opposed to the truth of the Bible.

In the New Testament, *nomos* is used as dictated by the Septuagint. This was the common practice and God did NOT inspire the New Testament authors to deviate from it. God has left it to True Worshipers to come to a true understanding of his teaching, his *torah*.

In summary, we in the modern world are stuck with English Bible translations that use "law" for "*torah*" even though it is **a completely incorrect translation**. The Jews who translated the Septuagint wanted to conform to the pagan ways of the world around them. Under this influence, the Pharisees ignored the

⁴⁴⁶ See Schürer II,2, page 26, Bruce (Nations) pages 169-170

⁴⁴⁷ See for example the discussion of Matthew chapter twenty-three in section **11.1 False Teachers in Galatia Error! Reference source not found** of the paper "**True Worship of the True God**" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

⁴⁴⁸ See Schürer II,3, pages 321-381, Barrett pages 173-189, and Yonge

teaching of God and developed their labyrinth of interpretations. Others, like Philo, allegorized away the teaching of God in an attempt to reconcile the Bible with pagan philosophy. **The notion that “torah” is law is pervasive in the modern world. True Worshippers need to go behind this notion and truly understand the teaching of God.**

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