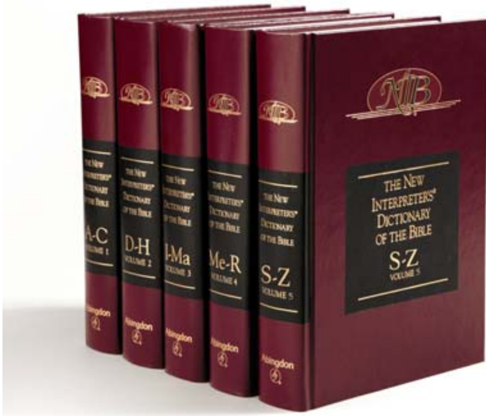

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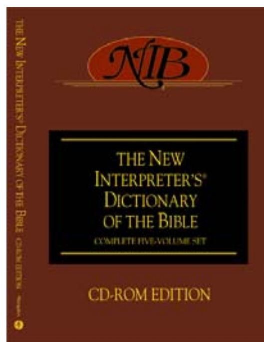

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ANGER [אַף ʾaf; θυμός thymos]. Anger is a strong feeling of displeasure or hostility that often provokes action against the person(s) or situations that arouse it.

1. Words for Anger
2. The Dynamics of Anger
3. The Trouble with Anger
4. The Value of Anger
5. Ambiguity in References to Anger
6. Controlling Anger

A. Words for Anger

The Hebrew word most often translated "anger" is ʾaf (Gen 27:45). The dual form of this word denotes the nostrils, which may suggest that ʾaf implies the snort that can accompany anger. Among other words translated as "anger," khemah (סְפַּחֲמָה; 2 Sam 11:20) suggests the furious heat of anger; it is also translated "fury," "rage," and "heat." Kharon (חָרוֹן) suggests something that blazes (kharah [חָרָה]; Gen 4:6); it is also translated "fury" and "heat" (see BURNING). ʿEvrah (עֶבְרָה) suggests something that bursts out and overwhelms (ʿavar [עָבַר]; Job 40:11); it, too, can be translated "fury." The word for wind or spirit, ruakh (רוּחַ), is sometimes translated "anger" (Judg 8:3). Kaʿas (כַּעַס; Eccl 7:9) suggests vexation, a strong feeling that can be mixed up with frustration and grief (the same word in Eccl 1:18). Qetsef (קֶצֶף) often suggests a stronger feeling of wrath (Esth 1:18). Zaʿaf (זַעַף) suggests the raging of a storm (2 Chr 16:10). Zaʿam (זַעַם) is usually reckoned to mean "indignation" (e.g., Jer 15:17). The most common NT word is thymos (Heb 11:27), which can also suggest passion or courage, and thus points to the strength of feelings involved in anger. Orgē (ὀργή; Jas 1:19) perhaps suggests an even stronger feeling—more often translated "wrath" (see WRATH; WRATH OF GOD).

B. The Dynamics of Anger

Biblical allusions to anger often refer to it simply as an aspect of being human, without necessarily suggesting a moral or theological judgment. It is part of a biblical understanding that by nature human beings get angry, as it is part of a biblical understanding that it is human nature to feel compassion or hatred or desire.

Anger is thus treated in the Bible as a natural response on the part of people who feel wronged. So Esau gets angry when Jacob swindles him (Gen 27:44-45), as does Jacob when Rachel treats him as responsible for her not having children (Gen 30:1-2), and Laban when he feels slighted (Gen 31:35). After his bride betrays his riddle, Samson goes home to his parents in hot anger (Judg 14:28)—he has been made a fool. Saul gets angry because of people's enthusiasm for David (1 Sam 18:8) and because of Jonathan's attitude to David (1 Sam 20:30). Abner gets angry at Ish-bosheth's implicit accusation of him (2 Sam 3:8). Naaman gets angry because he feels slighted (2 Kgs 5:11). Asa gets angry when challenged by a seer, as does Uzziah when challenged by the priests (2 Chr 16:10; 26:19). A man gets angry when his father has mercy on his brother in a way that seems unfair (Luke 15:28). Thus anger is a response to a sense that one has been personally devalued or slighted. One's human worth has been placed in question. A backbiting tongue therefore generates anger (Prov 25:23). So does jealousy—because it issues out of rejection, with its associated slight and shame (Prov 6:34). Paradoxically, it is

possible to be angry with oneself (Gen 45:5)—because one has slighted oneself or dishonored oneself by one's action.

Loss of self-esteem is not the only reason for anger. Sanballat and others get angry at Nehemiah's wall building (Neh 4:1, 7 [Heb. 3:33; 4:1]); they are frustrated at the prospect of loss of power. The wicked get angry when faithful people do well (Ps 112:10).

Anger is also a natural response to the wronging of someone with whom one identifies. Jacob's sons are very angry when Shechem rapes their sister (Gen 34:7; compare 49:5-7), as is Potiphar when he believes Joseph has attempted to seduce his wife (Gen 39:19). Jonathan gets angry because of his father's hostility to David, and thus to him (1 Sam 20:34). In these instances, identifying with the person who has directly been wronged means one's own esteem has been imperiled.

This throws into relief the more selfless nature of the anger that arises on other occasions. Moses' anger burns hot when he sees the gold calf and the Israelites dancing (Exod 32:19); this seems to be an anger expressing concern for Yahweh's honor. The mayor of Shechem is angry at a plot to unseat Abimelech as king (Judg 9:30). Nahash the Ammonite's threat to maim and disgrace the people of Jabesh-gilead arouses furious anger in Saul (1 Sam 11:6). Elisha gets angry with the king when he falls short in what he implicitly asks of God (2 Kgs 13:19). People get angry with Jesus for breaking the Law when he heals on the Sabbath (John 7:23). Jesus gets angry at people who do not want him to heal on the Sabbath (Mark 3:5).

In light of the serious significance that can thus attach to anger, some humor or irony appears on other occasions when someone gets angry. Balaam gets angry when his donkey will not move (Num 22:27), and his employer gets angry when Balaam will not curse Israel (Num 24:10). Eliab gets angry because he thinks his brother is acting above his station (1 Sam 17:28). Ahasuerus gets angry because his wife Vashti refuses to show off her beauty before the guests at his banquet (Esth 1:12). Elihu gets angry at Job because he justifies himself, and at Job's three friends because they do not answer adequately (Job 32:2-5). Jonah gets angry when God has mercy on Nineveh and when, in turn, God makes his sheltering plant wither (Jonah 4:1-9).

C. The Trouble with Anger

Anger can carry negative consequences. A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the person who is slow to anger quiets contention (Prov 15:18). The people's anger leads them to cause trouble to others (Pss 55:3; 124:3). Anger causes strife and transgression (Prov 29:22; 30:33), is cruel and overwhelming (Prov 27:4), or brings devastation and persecution (Isa 14:6; Amos 1:11). Thus Yahweh warns Cain that his naturally angry response to his rejection means that sin is crouching at the door of his life, ready to pounce, and his anger indeed issues in the murder of Abel (Gen 4:5-8). Anger makes Potiphar put Joseph in prison (Gen 39:19; compare Gen 40:2; 41:10; 2 Chr 16:10) and leads Simeon and Levi to overreact in slaughtering the men in Shechem (Gen 49:5-6). Anger makes Balaam beat his donkey, and it makes Barak berate and sack Balaam (Num 22:27; 24:10). It makes Naaman refuse to take the action that will bring healing (2 Kgs 5:11-12). It makes Ahasuerus depose Vashti and hang Haman (Esth 1:12; 2:1; 7:10). It makes Job rage at God (according to Bildad, at least; Job 18:4). It makes a householder send a servant to jail (Matt 18:34). It makes Herod kill a whole town's children (Matt 2:16).

The anger of a powerful person is therefore something of which to be wary (Gen 44:18; 2 Sam 11:20; Dan 2:12; 3:13; Matt 22:7). Fortunately it is often the case that "a soft answer turns away wrath" (Prov 15:1), as Naaman's servants illustrate (2 Kgs 5:11-14). Likewise, when the Ephraimites are

angered by not having been summoned to a battle against the Midianites, Gideon is able to placate them with a conciliatory answer (Judg 8:1-3).

Anger can also have terrible consequences for oneself. This is so for Saul, and Gen 49:7 sees the scattering of Simeon and Levi in Israel as a fruit of their angry action. In fact, anger is just stupid (Eccl 7:9).

In the NT anger is often simply condemned (Matt 5:22; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20; Eph 4:31; Col 3:8; 1 Tim 2:8). Do not even get angry at wickedness, a psalm advises, because it leads to wrongdoing (Ps 37:8)—perhaps because anger leads to joining evildoers, or perhaps because it leads to taking action against them wrongly. Proverbs advises not to associate with angry people, or risk ending up like them (Prov 22:24-25).

D. The Value of Anger

At the same time, passages noted above show how Scripture recognizes the positive significance of anger. It can be an appropriate response to wrongdoing, and a response that provides the energy to take action against wrongdoing. Yahweh points out that if Job had enough overflowing anger he could put down the arrogant and wicked (Job 40:11-12). It is when Yahweh's spirit comes on him that Saul gets very angry at the Ammonites' treatment of the people of Jabesh-Gilead and takes spectacular action on their behalf (1 Sam 11:6-11). Nehemiah gets angry at oppression within the community and takes decisive action (Neh 5:6). Yahweh stirs up the Philistines' anger against Judah and they invade and pillage Judah, unwittingly implementing Yahweh's will (2 Chr 21:16-17). An exception proves the rule: David gets angry when he hears about Amnon's rape of Tamar (2 Sam 13:21), but he never does anything about it.

E. Ambiguity in References to Anger

Perhaps because Scripture focuses on simply recognizing that anger is an aspect of human nature, the writers often leave its interpretation ambiguous. Moses exits from his last confrontation with Pharaoh "in hot anger" and later gets angry at the Israelites (Exod 11:8; 16:20). Anger makes him hurl away and break the stones bearing the Decalogue, burn and grind up the calf, throw the powder into water, and make the Israelites drink it (Exod 32:19-20). Moses gets angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, then with the army officers, for not obeying Yahweh's word (Lev 10:16; Num 31:14), and also with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram for their criticisms of him (Num 16:15). Samuel gets angry when Saul has not obeyed Yahweh, but Samuel is also angry when, as a result of Saul's disobedience, Yahweh rejects Saul (1 Sam 15:10-11). David gets angry when Yahweh kills Uzzah because he reached out to steady the ark, but in his anger, David is also afraid of Yahweh (2 Sam 6:8-9).

There is a still broader ambiguity. Human anger does not effect God's righteousness (Jas 1:20). Like vengeance, anger is God's business.

F. Controlling Anger

Scripture often refers to the importance of being slow to anger. The person who is slow to anger has great understanding, whereas a hasty temper exalts folly (Prov 14:29; see 19:11; 29:11; Jas 1:19). Although anger has a heat and a force that generates right action, this heat and force can also generate wrong action, or express itself against an object other than one that deserves it (2 Sam 12:5-6). Or it may generate action that goes too far: the community needs to safeguard against the hot anger of the avenger

of blood in case he takes action when someone had killed a person accidentally (Deut 19:6). Jacob curses the particularly fierce anger of his sons that led to their slaughtering the men of Shechem (Gen 49:7). The trouble is that anger takes self-control—people who can be slow to anger are as impressive as powerful rulers (Prov 16:32).

Ephesians thus exhorts people to be angry, but not to sin (4:26)—even though the same letter also condemns anger (4:31). (The exhortation in Ephesians follows the Greek in Ps 4:4 LXX, but it is doubtful that the Hebrew refers to anger.) The statement, "Do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Eph 4:26), is a little puzzling, as the importance of being slow to anger might imply that letting the sun go down on your anger would give time for reflection, time to cool off. The force of anger does dissipate with time (Gen 27:44-45; Esth 2:1; 7:10), and while that may sometimes be for the worse (the impetus to do the thing that needs doing may be lost), it may well be for the better. Presumably Ephesians is exhorting people not to nurse anger when they ought to let it dissipate. It is the godless in heart who cherish anger (Job 36:13).

JOHN GOLDINGAY

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<u>COVENANT,</u> <u>OT</u> <u>and</u> <u>NT</u> [בְּרִית berith, סְפֹּעֲדוּת ʿedhuth; διαθήκη diathēkē]. A covenant is a formal commitment made by one party to another party, or by two parties to one another; its seriousness is normally undergirded by an oath and/or rite undertaken before God and/or before other people.

A. Covenants (berith; diathēkē) Between God and the World or God and Israel

1. The Noah covenant
2. The Abraham covenants
    a. The covenant regarding land
    b. The covenant regarding offspring: Isaac
    c. The covenant regarding offspring: Ishmael
    d. The covenant as the basis for the exodus
3. The Sinai covenants
    a. The initial declaration at Sinai
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4. The Moab covenant
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B. Covenants (berith) Between God and Individuals or Groups
1. The priesthood covenant
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C. Covenants (ʿedhuth) as Declarations Concerning God's Expectations

D. Covenant as a More General Term for Relationships Between God and People in the Bible

E. Covenant As a Term For the Basis of Community Life

Bibliography

A. Covenants (berith; kēdiathe) between God and the World or God and Israel

Here a covenant is a solemn commitment made by God to human beings or by human beings to God or by human beings and God mutually.

1. The Noah covenant

The first covenant is made by God to NOAH, his descendants, and thus with all future humanity, including all other living creatures (Gen 6:18; 9:8-17). The covenant is a one-sided commitment on God's part, by which God undertakes never to flood the earth and thus destroy life on earth. From the point of view of the biblical writers, the creation of the world did not involve a covenant, perhaps because they thought that creation established a natural relationship between God and humanity. In human relationships there is a natural commitment of one person to another, specifically within the family. Parents do not covenant to look after their children; it is built instinctually into parenthood. But when the family relationship is extended to someone outside it, specifically when someone marries and brings a new person into the family, a covenant is involved. Covenants establish relationships where there was no relationship before. In the case of God and humanity, the natural relationship that came

about by creation has been devastated by human rebellion against God and by God's destroying the world. A fresh relationship therefore needs to be established through God's covenant.

The equivalent of a rite to seal the covenant is a sign that God attaches to it. The RAINBOW that appears in the clouds after the rain, and has the shape of a bow, will henceforth not be a sign that God is acting as a warrior yet will draw attention to the fact that the rain did not continue forever but yielded to fair weather. This natural event will become one of supernatural significance. While the rainbow will thus reassure humanity that the flood will not recur, Genesis makes more explicit that it will be a sign for God: It will remind God of this undertaking. The covenant is an "everlasting" one (berith ʿolam בְּרִית עוֹלָם). As long as human life continues on earth, this covenant commitment will hold. The Noah covenant is thus significant for all humanity throughout the ages. It guarantees the security of the human and animal creation from divine destruction (though it perhaps does not rule out humanity destroying the world).

Although the Noah covenant is a one-sided commitment on God's part, it illustrates the ambiguity that often holds over whether a covenant is unconditional or conditional. God makes no reference to conditions, and earlier comments suggest that this would be no coincidence. The reason the flood came about was humanity's rebellion against God. God knows that "the inclination of the human heart is evil from youth" (Gen 8:21). It would therefore be no use making a covenant conditional on humanity's responsiveness to God. On the other hand, the covenant is preceded by statements of God's expectations of humanity (Gen 9:1-7). It is not clear how many of these statements should be seen as commands, but in some way statements of divine expectations preface God's making the covenant. God is permanently committed to humanity and will not go back on that commitment, but God does have expectations of humanity. This is confirmed by the apparent reference to this "everlasting covenant" in Isa 24:5, which identifies the everlasting covenant with "laws" and "statutes" that humanity has broken, thereby causing a curse to devour the earth.

2. The Abraham covenants

a. The covenant regarding land. Yahweh first makes a covenant with Abraham to give the land of Canaan to his descendants (Gen 15:18-20; see J, YAHWIST). Here for the first time the verb for "making" a covenant is karath (כָּרַת, literally "cut"). The preceding ritual seems to explain it. Yahweh had repeated a promise to give Abraham the land, and Abraham had asked how he can have some assurance of this. That leads Yahweh to bid him bring various animals and birds; Abraham cuts the animals in half then falls into a deep sleep. A terrifying darkness falls, and Yahweh reiterates the promise. It will not be Abraham himself who enters into possession of the land but his descendants, after four cent. of oppression in a foreign land; it will not be fair to dispossess the Amorites yet, "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." Then a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch, representing Yahweh, pass between the dismembered animals. This is the sign that turns the promise into a covenant and explains why one "cuts" a covenant. It is tantamount to an enacted prayer or self-curse, "If I fail to keep this undertaking, may I be cut up as these animals have been." See ABRAHAM, OT.

Paul emphasizes (Gal 3:17) that God's covenant with Abraham was simply an unconditioned promise. It did not depend on obedience to the law, which would not be given for another four cent. See ABRAHAM, NT AND EARLY JUDAISM.

b. The covenant regarding offspring: Isaac. In God's second covenant with Abraham (Gen 17; P, PRIESTLY WRITERS) the focus of the covenant lies on the promise of offspring. Like the Noah covenant, this Abraham covenant issues entirely from God's initiative but leaves ambiguous the

relationship between divine commitment and human obligation. Once again, it is God who opens the conversation and does so with imperatives, then goes on to promises (Gen 17:1-2). The word for "making" the covenant is here nathan (נָתַן), the regular Hebrew word for "give," while subsequently (Gen 17:7) God speaks of "establishing" (qum קוּם) the covenant. Both underline the extent to which God claims responsibility for making the covenant. The fact that it is "between me and you" does not mean that both parties have equal involvement in establishing it. At no point is Abraham given opportunity to decide whether he wishes to be party to the covenant. He will simply be told something he has to do (though there will be a threat attached to failure to play one's part).

The covenant will apply to Abraham's descendants as well as Abraham himself, and the account emphasizes that like the Noah covenant, it will be an everlasting covenant (Gen 17:7, 13, 19). Yahweh also describes this as "a covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you" (Gen 17:7), and this comment on the mutual nature of the covenant strikes a new and far-reaching note.

The ambiguity over divine commitment and human obligation is underlined by the subsequent declaration that there is a covenant requirement laid on Abraham, but one of quite a different kind from the requirements stated in Gen 17:1. "This is my covenant, which you shall keep"; it also applies to Abraham's descendants, and to the rest of his household, including foreign slaves. "You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you" (Gen 17:10-13).

The Abraham covenant thus again parallels the Noah covenant in being supported by a sign: CIRCUMCISION. This sign, too, is given for God's sake; when God sees the sign, it reminds God that the divine covenant commitment applies to this person. Like the rainbow sign, circumcision is divinely mandated, but unlike that sign, it is humanly implemented. It can therefore be humanly ignored, though with fatal consequences: anyone who is not circumcised "shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant" (Gen 17:14). The absence of the sign thus also speaks to God. The fact that Yahweh tries to kill the uncircumcised Moses but gives up when Zipporah circumcises their son (Exod 4:24-26) fits with this. Neatly but perhaps fortuitously, be cut off is the same verb that appears in the expression cut a covenant. Yahweh's willingness to be cut for failing to keep the covenant needs to be matched by human willingness to be cut, and in the absence of that, the whole person is cut. Once again "cut" is a metaphor, and the OT is not explicit on whether it means the person is to be executed, or excommunicated, or whether it means the person will lose his or her place in the register of the people of God.

The fact that humanity has the possibility of not playing its part in the working of the covenant introduces the notion of "breaking" the covenant (parar פָּרַר) rather than "keeping it"—that is, obeying it. "Breaking" the covenant could suggest annulling, making permanently ineffective, as when someone annuls a vow (Num 30:8, 13, where it is the opposite of qum, "establish"). Or it could suggest violating, making ineffective at this point and imperiling but not annulling, as when someone violates a law (Num 15:31). In the broader context of the OT, Israel's recurrent breaking of the covenant does not have the effect of annulling it but rather of unleashing the sanctions that operate within the covenant's terms, as breaking a law does not make it any less of a law, though widespread breaking of a law can have that effect.

To speak of "breaking" the covenant does draw attention to the relationship between covenant and law. One way of understanding covenant is to see it as suggesting "obligation" that is imposed on oneself and/or imposed on other people. Insofar as the covenant is the requirement to be circumcised, it is an obligation God imposes on Abraham's offspring, like a law that must not be broken.

If one can presuppose acceptance of that obligation, when things go badly Israel can urge, "Have regard for your covenant" (Ps 74:20), in the conviction that Yahweh "is mindful of his covenant forever" (Ps 105:8). In 1 Chr 16:15-18, David takes up this psalm in urging people to "remember [the Lord's] covenant forever . . . , 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.'" The next psalm observes how for all Israel's recurrent rebellions and Yahweh's consequent chastisements, "For their sake he remembered his covenant, and showed compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love" (Ps 106:45). If the Priestly narrative was composed in the exile, when Israel had indeed systematically broken the covenant and it could seem as if Yahweh had annulled the covenant, the Abraham covenant underlines the permanence of Yahweh's covenant commitment. The fact that the covenant is not explicitly dependent on a response from its beneficiaries, except for the sign of circumcision, would also be significant in this context.

c. The covenant regarding offspring: Ishmael. Does it apply to his first son, Ishmael, and his offspring, or only to Isaac and his offspring? Ishmael is circumcised along with the rest of the male members of Abraham's household (Gen 17:23-27). But before that happens, God reasserts the promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah, making clear that Ishmael does not count as the fulfillment of that promise, and declares the intention to "establish" the covenant with Isaac. Of Ishmael, God says "I will bless him," in spectacular ways, so that he becomes a great nation, "but my covenant I will establish with Isaac" (Gen 17:21).

Paul assumes there are two covenants here, though he speaks of them as covenants with Hagar and Sarah. They provide an allegorical picture of the faith in which Paul was brought up, and the faith he now holds (Gal 4:21-31). As a slave, Hagar now stands for people in spiritual slavery, and thus, paradoxically, for Mount Sinai and the earthly Jerusalem. Sarah now stands for freedom and promise, and thus for "the Jerusalem above."

d. The covenant as the basis for the exodus. When the Israelites became serfs in Egypt and groaned out, "God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Exod 2:24). "Remembering" (zakhar זָכַר) is not so much the opposite of forgetting as an indication that God now gives thought to this covenant. One aspect of the covenant promise has been amply fulfilled; Abraham's descendants via Isaac and Jacob have become a huge company. But the covenant promise also involved their coming into possession of the land of the Canaan. The time for this has now arrived. The covenant is therefore the basis for acting to release Israel so that it can return to the land not as "aliens" but to receive it as a "possession."

God adds, "I will take you as my people, and I will be your God" (Exod 6:7). The second phrase takes up the expression from Gen 17:7 (NRSV translates it slightly differently); the first phrase complements it in such a way as to introduce the two-sided "covenant formula." God's words signify an imminent nuancing of the Abraham covenant. The greater mutuality of the covenant will now mean that a commitment of Israel to God complements the commitment of God to Israel. Something of the ambiguity of the Abraham covenant will be resolved. God is still the one who takes the initiative in the words that announce the covenant and in the acts that set it up (see Exod 6:6), but the covenant will integrally involve a more wide-ranging response on the people's part and a mutual relationship.

3. The Sinai covenants

a. The initial declaration at Sinai. In Exod 6:6-8, Yahweh had referred to delivering Israel from serfdom, establishing the mutual relationship, and taking them to the land. When they reach Sinai, in Exod 19:1-8

Yahweh points out that the first undertaking has been fulfilled; it is therefore possible to move onto the second. This will involve Israel keeping God's covenant. The phrase recurs from Gen 17:9-10, and the people could understandably reckon that Yahweh is simply reasserting the demand for circumcision; this might link with the ease with which they agree, "everything that the Lord has spoken we will do." Actually, it will become clear that keeping the covenant will now have much broader implications.

At this point, however, Yahweh is more explicit about the special nature of the relationship that will issue from the mutual covenant commitment. Implementing the intention to "take you as my people" will mean Israel becoming Yahweh's "treasured possession out of all the peoples." That will result in Israel becoming a priestly kingdom or holy nation. The two adjectives and the two nouns form more or less synonymous pairs. Israel is separated from other peoples in such a way as to belong distinctively to Yahweh in the way that the priesthood within a people belongs distinctively to the people's deity. As such they are a nation over which Yahweh personally reigns. They are not under the rule of some other people, as they were in Egypt. They are freed from serfdom in Egypt not so that they can simply be free but so that they can be given to the service of Yahweh.

b. The confirming on Sinai. The people's initial commitment to keeping the covenant (Exod 19:8) clears the way for their meeting with Yahweh at Sinai. This is often reckoned to be the occasion of the making of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel, but the narrative is sparse in its reference to covenant.

In Exod 20–24 the word comes first in the requirement that Israel make no covenant with the inhabitants of Canaan or with their gods (Exod 23:32). The second requirement explains the first. A basic obligation of some covenants is a requirement of exclusive loyalty; some political covenants or treaties require a subordinate state to show exclusive loyalty to its imperial overlord (for instance, Israel in its relationship with Assyria) and not to ally with other peoples. Analogously, Israel is expected to show exclusive loyalty to Yahweh and thus not to seek help from other deities. That is implicit in the idea of Israel being Yahweh's covenant people (e.g., Exod 19:5-6) and explicit in the first of Yahweh's Ten Words (Exod 20:2-3; see TEN COMMANDMENTS). Exodus 23:32 makes the link with the covenant. Exclusive commitment to Yahweh rules out covenants with other peoples because these would involve or lead to acknowledgment of their deities. Either the making of a covenant is a religious act that would require recognition of each others' gods, or close relationship with these other peoples would lead to being attracted by their gods. Israel looking at these other peoples as sources of help and strength instead of looking to Yahweh is indeed an issue in Israelite history. The Gibeonites' tricking the Israelites into a berith (a covenant/treaty) implicitly involves them in a contravention of this requirement. Hosea overtly critiques Ephraim for making a berith with Assyria (Hos 11:12–12:1). And when Judah makes a covenant with neighbors in order to be able to resist Assyria, Isa 28:15, 18 declares that it has made a covenant with death.

The other references to covenant in the first stage of events at Sinai come in the account of the meeting between representative Israelites and Yahweh in Exod 24. This is often reckoned to be the occasion of covenant-making, but Exodus does not describe it as such, again perhaps because Exodus is clear that Yahweh and Israel are already in covenant relationship. What happens at Sinai reconfirms the covenant, specifically in light of the expectations of Israel and the undertakings that Yahweh makes to take the people to the land and care for them there (see Exod 20–23). Moses now reads "the book of the covenant" to the people and they make a commitment to obey Yahweh; the narrative thus repeats the scene in Exod 19:3-8, resolving the ambiguity we noted there. It is now explicit that "keeping the covenant" involves more than circumcision; it involves all this "book of the covenant" requires. The people's accepting that commitment is part of what is involved in what we might call the confirming or

renewing of the covenant in the form that Yahweh has declared that it will now have, with this new requirement in light of what Yahweh has done for the people in bringing them out of Egypt.

In scholarly parlance the title "the book of the covenant" usually means Exod 20:22–23:33, or part of it; see COVENANT, BOOK OF THE. Exodus 20:1-17 is simply something that Yahweh "says"; it is separated from what follows by the further narrative in Exod 20:18-21, and it is often reckoned to be a later composition that has been placed at the beginning of the Sinai story because of its great importance as a summary of Yahweh's expectations. It will later become clearer that the Ten Words are the ʿedhuth (עדות, "covenant") written by God, which is to be put into the ark; see Exod 31:18; 32:15-16.

The sacramental confirming of the covenant is associated with this reading of the book of the covenant. Sacrifices have already been offered, and Moses has already taken half the blood drained from the sacrificial animals and spattered it on the altar. After the people's declaration of commitment, he spatters the other half on the people themselves, saying, "See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words" (Exod 24:8). The rite with the blood does not correspond to any regular worship practice, though it does recall the event narrated in Gen 15:7-21 and the idea that one "cuts" a covenant. Both Yahweh (represented by the altar) and the people are spattered with blood, sealing their commitment and bringing home the solemn undertaking that this meeting on Sinai represents. It is as if either will be torn apart for failure to keep their undertaking. The people have "made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Ps 50:5) and the covenant blood subsequently undergirds Yahweh's promises to Jerusalem (Zech 9:11).

c. The reaffirming after the making of the golden calf. The people's making a gold calf brings about a crisis in the relationship between Yahweh and Israel as Yahweh contemplates annihilating the people. The account in Exod 32–33 does not refer to the covenant, but the incident and its aftermath implicitly raise questions about the covenant relationship. They show that Yahweh's permanent covenant with Abraham's descendants does not leave Israel able to get away with despising Yahweh. It is therefore significant that Yahweh now reaffirms a covenant commitment to Israel. Indeed, strictly and significantly this is actually the first time Yahweh makes a covenant commitment at Sinai. Yahweh did not need to do so earlier because Yahweh and Israel are already in covenant relationship. With events in Exod 32–33 having implicitly imperiled that, this is the moment when Yahweh declares, "I hereby make a covenant" (Exod 34:10).

Yet again there is some ambiguity over the relationship of divine commitment and human obligation in this covenant. On one hand, in beginning to spell out the implications of the declaration about making a covenant, Yahweh first promises to do great wonders before the people; these will be the wonders that will be involved in giving the people the land, to which Yahweh immediately goes on to refer (Exod 34:10-11). But Yahweh precedes that declaration of intent by an exhortation to "observe what I command you today" and then spells that out as involving not making a covenant with the peoples of the land (Exod 34:11-16), renewing and expanding the earlier command about covenant-making (Exod 23:32). Once again Yahweh thus emphasizes the exclusive aspect to this covenant relationship, then continues by detailing other expectations of the people (Exod 34:17-26) in a way that overlaps with the book of the covenant. This reformulating of the requirements laid down in the book of the covenant is implicitly an act of grace on Yahweh's part. Indeed, the original revealing of expectations was an act of grace, insofar as once we know what God wants of us, we can do it; we cannot do that if we are left in the dark. Restating the expectations underlines the point. Yahweh is still reaching out in grace to Israel in being willing to do so.

So Yahweh's covenant-making (Exod 34:10) might consist in making the promise about doing wonders, or in laying down those expectations, with the promise as a preamble, or it might involve both of these. The persistence of such ambiguity in references to the covenant is of theological significance. It does not imply that Yahweh simply fails to make things clear. It rather points to the fact that the relationship between divine commitment and human obligation is inherently ambiguous, dynamic, volatile, and changeable. A covenant is not a contract, as the adversary in Job 1–2 asserts toward Job's self-perceptions about his relationship with God. The "covenant" that Leviathan would not make to serve Job (Job 41:4) would be something like a contract, but the covenant that Job had made with his eyes (Job 31:1) was an inner commitment that no one could test.

A covenant does involve a mutual commitment, but it is not exactly conditional. In this respect it rather resembles marriage. This requires that both people commit themselves to the other, but we would not say that one person makes a commitment on condition that the other does. This would underestimate the element of trust and risk in the relationship. In a contract, the conditions are calculated to minimize the element of risk and make trust less necessary. This is good practice in certain areas of life; there is nothing wrong with contracts. But we would rather marriage were not contractual and calculating in this way. In this respect the relationship between Yahweh and Israel resembles a personal relationship such as marriage more than a contract, alliance, or treaty. The recurrent ambiguity in the texts about the relationship between divine commitment and human obligation is a sign of that.

It is possible that the OT presents marriage as a covenant, though the texts that may indicate this view (Prov 2:19; Ezek 16:8; Mal 2:14) are all allusive. It also refers to a personal covenant between David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:3), a "sacred covenant" (lit., "a covenant of Yahweh"; 1 Sam 20:8), perhaps so designated because it was "a covenant before the Lord" (1 Sam 23:18). A psalmist laments, "My companion . . . violated a covenant with me" (Ps 55:20).

After laying out those expectations in Exod 34, "the Lord said to Moses: Write these words; in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel" (Exod 34:27). The reference is presumably to the words in vv. 10-26. The narrative goes on to tell us that "he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments" (Exod 34:28); as the NRSV margin notes, they are literally "the ten words." Within the narrow context we would reckon that "he" is "Moses." But the chapter began with Yahweh declaring the intention to rewrite what was written on the tablets that Moses broke, so more likely the "he" is Yahweh, who was the subject in the previous verse, "the Lord said to Moses." Either way, "the words of the covenant" are here "the ten commandments," and they complement "the book of the covenant," both being integral to the covenant as statements of the obligations that Yahweh imposes and Israel accepts.

d. The restatement near the end of the time at Sinai. Near the end of the time at Sinai, Yahweh restates the point, in Lev 26 (to put it another way, Lev 26 is the Holiness Code's equivalent to Exod 34). Here the relationship between Israel's obedience and Yahweh's covenant-keeping is less equivocal: "If you follow my statutes . . . I will give you your rains in their season . . . and I will maintain my covenant with you . . . . And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people" (Lev 26:3-12). "Maintain" is qum, the verb the NRSV earlier translated "establish" (Gen 6:18; 9:9, 11, 17; 17:7, 19, 21; Exod 6:4); "establish" is a more natural meaning for the verb. The promise in Lev 26:9 amounts to a renewed undertaking to make the covenant work, here in the context of the people's coming arrival in the land (compare Deut 8:18, where NRSV translates "confirm"). See H, HOLINESS CODE.

Leviticus 26:15 again parallels Gen 17 in allowing for Israel's "breaking" the covenant, to which severe sanctions are attached. Persisting in disobedience will mean Yahweh "will bring the sword against you, executing vengeance for the covenant" (Lev 26:25). "Vengeance" overstates the affective aspect to naqam (נָקָם); the Hebrew term does suggest acting with feelings, but it also presupposes that the action is the proper redress. Yahweh itemizes this redress in horrific fashion, but then declares that if the people turn back to Yahweh, "then I will remember my covenant with Jacob; I will remember also my covenant with Isaac and also my covenant with Abraham" (Lev 26:42). Remembering the covenant and thus taking action on the people's behalf is possible in the context of their wrongdoing as well as their undeserved oppression (Exod 2:24). No more than at Sinai will Yahweh annihilate them and thus "break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God; but I will remember in their favor the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of the land of Egypt" (Lev 26:44-45).

The ambiguity of the relationship between divine commitment and human obligation yet again reasserts itself. The warnings presuppose that the people have totally failed to keep their covenant obligations, and this would give Yahweh quite enough reason to terminate the covenant. The mere fact that the covenant was everlasting might not guarantee that it stays in force no matter what Israel does. Many things that God says will be everlasting such as the Temple, the priesthood, and the Davidic monarchy seem not to be everlasting. That declaration only guarantees that Yahweh is not fickle and will not have a random change of mind. This does not stop Yahweh terminating them in light of people's intransigence. But Yahweh will not "break" the covenant (Yahweh uses the verb that describes Israel's failure) let alone terminate it; perhaps "break" and "annul" end up having the same meaning in this context.

Even in this connection Yahweh will not "forget [i.e., put out of mind, ignore] the covenant with your ancestors that he swore to them" (Deut 4:31). Admittedly, at the beginning of Judges Yahweh declares, "I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you. For your part, do not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my command" (Judg 2:1-2). Yahweh will therefore not drive these peoples out before Israel. Is Yahweh therefore breaking the covenant, on the basis of the fact that Israel has done so? Or does a responsive action such as that not count as breaking the covenant? On the other hand, even when Ephraim has long been unfaithful and has been chastised, "the Lord was gracious to them; he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them; nor has he banished them from his presence until now" (2 Kgs 13:23). "Until now" apparently implies that even the fall of Samaria and the exile of its people did not constitute such destruction or banishment. In Jer 14:21 the prophet thus feels free to urge, "do not break your covenant with us," despite our wickedness.

4. The Moab covenant

A generation on from Sinai, on the edge of the land, Yahweh commands MOSES to make a covenant with the Israelites to supplement the covenant at Horeb, by means of which the new generation will "enter into the covenant of the Lord your God, sworn by an oath, which the Lord your God is making with you today; in order that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your God" (Deut 29:12-13). In substance the terms of the covenant are the same, though they are adapted to aspects of life in the land in a way that reflects needs that will arise in later contexts (e.g., the people wanting a king and the problem of false prophecy). But this covenant-making also has the effect of putting the obligation of the covenant on these people who were not at Sinai. For the readers, that generation stands for each succeeding Israelite generation, and thus for them. "I am making this covenant, sworn by an oath, not only with you who stand here with us today before the Lord our God, but also with those who are not here with us today" (Deut 29:14-15).

Deuteronomy expresses more about covenant than any other book in the Bible. Indeed, although the actual occurrences of the word come chiefly in Deut 4–11 and 29–31, Deuteronomy as a whole can be seen as a covenant document, a book structured to reflect and expound Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh (see DEUTERONOMY, BOOK OF). This structuring parallels that of a treaty between an imperial power and an underling such as Israel. It has been argued that it more closely resembles Hittite treaties from the 2nd millennium than Assyrian treaties from the 1st millennium and thus that it more likely reflects the work of Moses than the work of the 7th-cent. theologians whom the scholarly world has more often reckoned to be the authors of Deuteronomy, but like most aspects of the history of covenant in Israel, this question is controverted. Either way, most Israelites would presumably be unaware of the treaty background of the work, but the theologians who drafted the text perhaps found that this political arrangement helped them articulate the dynamics of Yahweh's relationship with Israel, though we should be wary of exaggerating the importance of this factor in the development of covenant thinking.

A political treaty might review the past relationship between the empire and the underling, lay down the basic requirement of loyalty to the empire, itemize specific requirements, describe the benefits and sanctions attached to compliance and noncompliance, and provide for the solemnizing and regular reading of the treaty. Deuteronomy is much longer than a treaty, but this comparison helps one see aspects of its dynamic and the way it could have communicated at least with Israel's leadership.

First, Deut 1–3 reviews the relationship between Yahweh and Israel since Sinai, as background to the reaffirmation of the covenant on the edge of the land, noting both the way Yahweh has supported Israel and the way Israel has been inclined to rebellion. Each of these is also background to the requirements that will follow.

Deuteronomy 4–11 lays down the fundamental requirement that Israel should respond to what Yahweh has done by showing unqualified commitment to Yahweh and having nothing to do with other deities. Although in a literal sense Yahweh made the covenant with the parents of the people about to enter the land, Moses declares that Yahweh did not (merely) make it with them but with this present generation (Deut 5:2-3). The NRSV translates "ancestors" rather than "parents," which brings out the fact that Deuteronomy presents every later generation of Israel as faced with the same expectations as it portrays as binding on the Moab generation. Each generation that hears Deuteronomy read is bound by the basic expectations laid down in the Ten Words that follow in Deut 5:6-21. Exclusive loyalty to Yahweh involves making no covenant with another deity (Deut 7:2). It is the converse of the fact that Yahweh keeps covenant with those who keep their side of the commitment (Deut 7:9, 12).

The itemizing of specific requirements in Deut 12–26 is much more extensive than the equivalent section of a treaty; in a way Deuteronomy combines the form of a law code with that of a treaty. This section contains one telling reference to covenant, in the course of another comment on serving other gods than Yahweh. A person who does that "transgresses his covenant" (Deut 17:2-3; the verb is used of Achan, Josh 7:11, 15). It is another way of saying that this action involves "breaking" the covenant.

Deuteronomy 27–31 provides for the memorializing of the words of the law when the people enter the land and for their reading out on subsequent occasions, describes the blessings and curses attached to obedience and disobedience, and provides for the solemnizing of the covenant. It has been reckoned that the Festival of Tabernacles at the New Year in the Fall was also an annual covenant renewal festival, but the OT does not directly suggest this. Deuteronomy warns that Yahweh will implement "all the curses of the covenant written in this book of the law" when people have "abandoned the covenant of the Lord" by turning to other gods (Deut 29:21, 25-26). Joshua will reaffirm this at the end of his life (Josh 23:16);

he also “made a covenant with the people” to confirm their commitment to exclusive service of Yahweh (Josh 24:25).

5. The covenant broken

Psalm 25:10, 14 promises that God is faithful to people who “keep his covenant and his decrees” and that “he makes his covenant known to them,” and Israel needs to be able to claim, “we have not . . . been false to your covenant” (Ps 44:17). But the references to covenant in Josh 9 and Judg 2 show how it did not take Israel long to break the covenant. Solomon does the same in making marriage alliances with foreign peoples, and pays a severe penalty (1 Kgs 11:11). Elijah’s critique of Ephraim is that they have “forsaken” the covenant, which sounds more far reaching (1 Kgs 19:10, 14). Hosea likewise critiques Ephraim for transgressing the covenant (Hos 8:1), specifically for doing so “at Adam,” a place on the Jordan (Hos 6:7); we do not know what happened there. Ephraim’s “despising” and “transgressing” the covenant, failing to keep it in mind, is the basis for the fall of Samaria and Ephraim’s exile (2 Kgs 17:15, 35, 38; 18:12). “They did not keep God’s covenant, but refused to walk according to his law” (Ps 78:10).

The same is true of Judah, though the narratives do not express the matter thus. Indeed, they emphasize the way Asa and his people, Hezekiah, and especially Josiah and his people made covenants that expressed an exclusive commitment to Yahweh, going back on the stance of the previous generation (2 Kgs 23:2-3; 2 Chr 15:12; 29:10; 34:30-32). The basis for Josiah’s act is a “book of the covenant,” earlier described (§A.3.b) as a “book of the law,” a scroll found in the course of remodeling in the Temple (2 Kgs 22). The expression recalls Exod 24:7; it occurs only in these two connections. But the usual critical view has been that Josiah’s actions and discovery suggest the emergence of the book of Deuteronomy. (Second Kings 23:21 relates how Josiah also celebrated the Passover in accordance with the book of the covenant, but Exod 20–24 does not mention Passover.)

On the other hand, Jeremiah does challenge Judah about its attitude to the covenant (Jer 11:1-13) and prospectively imagines other nations explaining Jerusalem’s destruction by Judah’s forsaking the covenant—again, perhaps a more drastic act than transgressing or breaking it (Jer 22:8-9). Likewise, Ezekiel speaks of the people having despised the oath and broken the covenant (Ezek 16:59). The people have no right to “recite my statutes, or take my covenant on your lips” (Ps 50:16). “They were not true to his covenant” (Ps 78:37). Thus on the eve of Jerusalem’s fall Yahweh declares, “I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath, breaking the covenant” (Ezek 16:59). Apparently Yahweh does intend to break the covenant, though this need not mean annulling it, any more than it does when Israel breaks the covenant. And the fact that Yahweh immediately goes on to declare the intention then to bear the covenant in mind (Ezek 16:60) suggests that this is not so. Yet Yahweh’s subsequent declaration of intent to establish with Israel an everlasting covenant (another one? Ezek 16:60) suggests that Yahweh’s act is a very serious one.

The enigmatic Zech 11:10 perhaps also refers retrospectively to the fall of Ephraim and Judah, occasions of the breaking of “the covenant with all the peoples” (NRSV has “annulling,” but the verb is the one usually translated “break”). The OT does not elsewhere refer to a “covenant with all the peoples.” A covenant that benefits the nations is hardly relevant in the context; this covenant is more likely one that makes the nations Yahweh’s servants in protecting and blessing Israel (compare the covenant “with” the animals in Hos 2:18; also Job 5:23). By breaking that covenant, Yahweh freed the nations to devastate Ephraim and Judah. Ezekiel 17:11-21 applies covenant language to the nations and Judah in a rather different way. Nebuchadnezzar has made a covenant (i.e., an agreement or treaty) with Zedekiah that involved Judah behaving itself, but Zedekiah has rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. “Can he break the

covenant and yet escape?" The answer is surely yes, in some circumstances. But Zedekiah has despised and broken "my covenant" (Ezek 17:11-21). Yahweh is in covenant with Nebuchadnezzar as Yahweh's agent in ruling Judah and controlling its destiny.

6. The new covenant

Beyond the calamity of exile Yahweh declares the intention of making a new covenant with both Judah and Ephraim (Jer 31:31-34). It will be new because the thing Yahweh intends to do is different; it is new as the Sinai covenant was new over against the Abraham covenant. The Sinai covenant moved from a promise about Abraham becoming a great people to the setting up of a relationship between this people and God and a focus on giving this people the land. In addition it added a whole corpus (indeed, several corpora) of requirements to the relationship, though much of this material simply spelled out the basic expectation that the people would indeed be Yahweh's people, and exclusively so. The heart of the people's covenant-breaking thus lay in their serving of other gods.

Yahweh's intention now is to write this requirement in the people's heart. The nature of the Sinai and Moab covenants was to have Yahweh's requirements written in a book. The challenge to acknowledge Yahweh was therefore one that Israelites had to issue to one another. The work Yahweh will now do in their hearts will make this unnecessary and the covenant aim that "I will be their God and they shall be my people" will be fulfilled. The last phrase in Jeremiah's promise is "for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more." It may indicate how Yahweh will do this writing into the people's hearts. The extraordinary nature of Yahweh's grace shown in not casting them off but rather being prepared to forgive and forget will be what finally gets to them and wins their allegiance.

Ezekiel makes the same point more sardonically. Although Judah has despised the oath and broken the covenant, Yahweh will bear the covenant in mind and in fact establish an everlasting covenant with them. That will lead to their feeling shame at their past behavior "when I forgive you all that you have done" (Ezek 16:59-63). "I will bring you within the bond of the covenant" (Ezek 20:37). He adds, "I will make with them a covenant of peace (shalom שָׁלוֹם)," a covenant that guarantees security and blessing (Ezek 34:25-31), and it "shall be an everlasting covenant with them" (Ezek 37:26). Israel will thus "come and join themselves to the Lord by an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten" Jer 50:5). The NRSV wording may suggest an everlasting covenant that they make and will not forget, but it would fit the other occurrences of such language if the verse again refers to an everlasting covenant that Yahweh makes and will not forget.

A particular aspect of this covenant commitment will be that Yahweh will always be speaking through the prophet (Isa 59:21). Isaiah 55:3 promises "an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David," taking up the charge at the end of Ps 89 that Yahweh has abandoned the covenant with David and offering a distinctive response. Yahweh will be true to the covenant with David by extending its application to the people as a whole. Israel can thus be "a covenant to the people" (Isa 42:6; 49:8). This expression recalls the idea that Abraham can be a blessing. It suggests that Israel can be an embodiment for the world of what it means to be in covenant relationship with Yahweh, and thus be a means of light coming to the nations.

The Second Temple period saw Israel indeed keeping the covenant in a way they had not before. In particular, they gave up worship of other gods and worship by means of images, the key first two requirements of the Ten Words. In Ezra 10:3 the people who have married foreign women undertake to make a covenant with God to end these marriages and thus express an unqualified commitment to Yahweh alone. In accordance with the third commandment, they safeguard against wrongful use of

Yahweh's name by giving up uttering the name at all, and in accordance with the fourth, they come to be committed to observing the Sabbath, which can even be seen as an everlasting covenant for Israel (Exod 31:16; Lev 24:8). Thus by NT times these requirements can be taken for granted. Conversely, by then the Jewish people are in occupation of something like the old bounds of the land, the area that belonged both to Judah and to Ephraim. Yahweh has thus kept the promise to implement this new covenant. Indeed, they are the "holy covenant" (Dan 11:28, 30), a strong way of defining them as the covenant people. Further, the spread of appreciation of Jewish religion through the Diaspora means they have become a covenant to the people. Yet they are again under the domination of a foreign empire and once again need God to "remember his holy covenant" (Luke 1:72).

7. The Jesus covenant

The NT shows rather little explicit interest in covenant, though in the broader sense the concerns of covenant are embedded in the theological thinking of the NT. Luke 1:72 declares that Jesus came because God did "remember his holy covenant" and the Gospel of Mark casts Jesus' death in light of OT covenant: "My blood of the covenant . . . is poured out for many" (Mark 14:24). According to the Gospels, Jesus came to fulfill the covenant. The reference to "pouring out" and to "many" suggests a link with Isa 53 and thus ultimately with the "covenant for the people" in Isa 42:6; 49:8. The Jesus covenant will benefit the world more spectacularly than the previous versions of the covenant did. The idea of the "blood of the covenant" (Exod 24:8; Zech 9:11) is reworked in Jesus' words. In the OT, being unfaithful to the covenant could issue in the covenant-maker's blood being shed. Here, Jesus' blood is to be shed that the covenant may become operative.

In the par. passage, Matt 26:28, Jesus adds that the pouring out of his blood brings about "the forgiveness of sins." He thus takes up Jeremiah's talk of a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34). This is explicit in a different way in the Lukan version, Luke 22:20, where Jesus speaks of "the new covenant in my blood." The text ignores the question whether God has already fulfilled the new covenant promise in the life of Second Temple Israel and uses the image of a new covenant to interpret the significance of Jesus' death. Matthew's formulation indicates the way in which this is a new covenant, because Jesus' death is of key significance for the forgiveness of the many, both Israel and the world. It will still be true that "to them belong . . . the covenants" (Rom 9:4), but people who are now "strangers to the covenant of promise" (Eph 2:12) will thus cease to be so. In keeping with this, Peter reminds Jews in Jerusalem that they are "the descendants . . . of the covenant that God gave to your ancestors, saying to Abraham, 'And in your descendants all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" This comes about through Jesus, who calls them to turn from their wicked ways (Acts 3:25-26). That is the way they will find forgiveness.

Apostles such as Paul saw themselves as "ministers of a new covenant," whose novelty lies in its being "not of letter but of spirit" (2 Cor 3:6). This antithesis corresponds to but restates the one in Jer 31:31-34. In Paul's interpretation, the Jewish people of Paul's day have the written word, once "chiseled in letters on stone tablets," but their rejection of the gospel shows that this is all they have. When they read the old covenant, it is as if there is a veil over their minds, which is set aside only in Christ (2 Cor 3:14). Otherwise, they do not "get it." Paul thus sees the new covenant as a present reality, though he can of course recognize that the process of transformation is incomplete; further, he cannot believe that God will never take away that veil. Thus he can also see the implementation of Jeremiah's new covenant as lying at the time when God's ultimate purpose is fulfilled and all Israel is saved; "as it is written . . . 'And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins'" (Rom 11:25-27).

Hebrews develops the notion of the new covenant most systematically (see esp. Heb 8–9). Like the Gospels, it takes up the expression "blood of the covenant," referring specifically to the Exod 24

narrative (Heb 9:19-20) and takes it in a new direction in order to expound the significance of Jesus' death. Whereas in the OT the sacrifice involved in confirming the covenant at Sinai was separate from the regular sacrificial system, Hebrews brings these two together; it can then see the covenant sacrifice as a cleansing sacrifice (Heb 9:21-22). But the fact that Jer 31:34 speaks of forgiveness as still future shows that these cleansing sacrifices did not really "work." So "Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant" by virtue of the fact that "a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant" (Heb 9:15). The old covenant with its shortcomings (Heb 8:7-8) is thus obsolete and about to disappear (Heb 8:13). The single definitive sacrifice that Christ offered makes the regular sacrifices now unnecessary.

This puts people who believe in Jesus in a privileged position, though also in a solemn one, because the superiority of the new covenant is matched by a greater enormity involved when someone has "profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified" (Heb 10:29). But Hebrews has better hopes of its readers and prays that "by the blood of the eternal covenant" God may take them to complete maturity (Heb 12:20-22).

The Jesus covenant is thus a reworking of the covenant, analogous to the several reworkings that have preceded it. It is the means whereby the Gentile world is drawn into the covenant relationship that goes back to Abraham. There is not one covenant for Jews and one for Gentiles.

B. Covenants (berith) Between God and Individuals or Groups

1. The priesthood covenant

Malachi 2:1-9 speaks most systematically about a covenant with Levi, a "covenant of life and well-being" (shalom), which Yahweh wants to "hold" (literally, "be"). Levi himself made an appropriate response to that covenant, but his descendants have "corrupted" it. They may have done that by colluding with the unworthy offerings condemned in Mal 1, but in addition the priests who have married foreign women "have defiled the priesthood, the covenant of the priests and the Levites" (Neh 13:29). In this context the covenant may be the priesthood's covenant or commitment to Yahweh rather than Yahweh's to them (see PRIESTS AND LEVITES).

Similarly, Mal 2:10-16 goes on to speak of Judah "profaning the covenant of our ancestors" because it has "married the daughter of a foreign god." You have "been faithless" to "the wife of your youth" although she is "your companion and your wife by covenant." The juxtaposition of these passages suggests another reference to the involvement of Levi as well as the other clans in marriages with people committed to other gods. Apparently these marriages first involved divorce from an Israelite wife, "your wife by covenant": lit., "the wife of your covenant." This might imply that the first marriage was understood as a covenant or simply that the first wife was an Israelite, someone within the covenant between the people and Yahweh, whereas the new wife was outside that covenant. It is then another way of noting how such a marriage "profaned the covenant of our ancestors."

In the context of the imminent destruction of the Temple, Yahweh had declared that it would be no more possible to break the covenant with the Levites as people to minister to Yahweh than to break the covenant of day and night (Jer 33:19-22). But as usual this commitment might presuppose the unstated assumption that they stay faithful to their own covenant commitment.

Yahweh gives a specific covenant to Aaron's son Phinehas, because of his passionate zeal for Yahweh in killing an Israelite who took a Midianite wife (Num 25:10-13). This, too, is a "covenant of shalom,"

and “a covenant of priesthood,” perhaps a promise that his line will always have a place in the Aaronic priesthood. The “prince of the covenant” (Dan 11:22) is likely the high priest.

2. The David covenant

In his “last words” David says that God “made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure” (2 Sam 23:5). The narrative has not recorded this, though one could see Yahweh’s promise in 2 Sam 7 as covenantlike. More emphatically, Ps 89:3 observes to Yahweh, “You said, ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David: “I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations . . . . Forever I will keep my steadfast love for him, and my covenant with him will stand firm . . . . I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips’” (Ps 89:3-4, 28, 34). The promissory nature of the David covenant makes it comparable with the Abraham covenant.

The Judean king Abijah reminded Ephraim that Yahweh gave the kingship forever to David and his sons “by a covenant of salt” (2 Chr 13:5). We do not know the background of this expression (for which see also Num 18:19, and Lev 2:13), but it seems to underline the notion of permanency. Second Chronicles 21:7 notes that despite its wrongdoing “the Lord would not destroy the house of David because of the covenant that he had made with David.” The same undertaking that made it impossible to break the Levi covenant would make it impossible to break the David covenant so that his heirs would not sit on the throne (Jer 33:19-26).

Actually Yahweh has abandoned the Davidic king: “You have renounced the covenant with your servant” (Ps 89:39). But then, according to another psalm, what Yahweh had actually said was, “If your sons keep my covenant and my decrees that I shall teach them, their sons also, forevermore, shall sit on your throne” (Ps 132:12).

C. Covenants (ʿedhuth) as Declarations Concerning God’s Expectations

The NRSV translates ʿedhuth as “covenant,” which appears frequently in Exodus, Numbers, and the Psalms, and offers the alternative meanings of “testimony” and “treaty.” Testimony, the traditional translation, derives from the fact that related words refer to bearing witness, but ʿedhuth does not seem to have this connotation. The link with those related words suggests that ʿedhuth constitutes a solemn declaration by God, but the declaration’s content relates to God’s expectations of Israel. The TNIV also reckons it links with the covenant and translates “covenant law.” In a broad sense these expectations are indeed part of Yahweh’s covenant relationship with Israel, though the occurrences of ʿedhuth do not make a link with berith. In 2 Kgs 17:15 the fall of Ephraim is explained by the fact that the people “despised his statutes and his ʿedhuth.” Psalm 19:7 enthuses over Yahweh’s ʿedhuth in parallelism with enthusing over Yahweh’s law, precepts, and commandment. In 2 Kgs 11:12 and 2 Chron 23:11 the priest gives the king ʿedhuth—presumably some exposition of Yahweh’s expectations.

The word often appears in the phrases “ark of the covenant” and “tabernacle of the covenant,” so called because the ʿedhuth was put inside the ark in the tabernacle (e.g., Exod 25:16, 21-22; Num 1:50-53). The ark can also be described as “the ark of the berith of the Lord” (Num 10:33; 14:44; frequently in Josh 3–6), which does make a link between ʿedhuth and berith and also confirms the view that berith can often refer to Israel’s commitment to Yahweh.

The nature of this ʿedhuth is spelled out at the close of Yahweh’s instructions about the tabernacle, when Yahweh gave Moses “the two tablets of the ʿedhuth, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God”

(Exod 31:18). Their content was presumably the Ten Words and/or the Book of the Covenant. On discovering the people's actions in making the gold calf, a direct contravention of a central concern of these, Moses breaks these tablets, but Yahweh subsequently undertakes to replace them (Exod 34:1, 29).

D. Covenant as a More General Term for Relationships Between God and People in the Bible

In the history of theology, the significance of covenant broadened so that it became a term for the relationship between God and Israel even where the word berith does not occur. Indeed, the original relationship between God and humanity in the garden of Eden has been seen as covenantal. Specifically, "federal theology" sees this as the "covenant of works" that was the original basis for the relationship between God and humanity. But not only does Genesis fail to refer to that original relationship as covenantal; it does not imply that the relationship was based on works but rather on the same interrelationship of God's grace and human response (Hos 6:7 refers to Israel transgressing the covenant "like Adam," which would imply that Adam had transgressed a covenant, but many translators assume the text originally read "at [the place] Adam" on the Jordan (so NRSV). Isaiah 24:5 and Amos 1:9 might also be taken to refer to a creation covenant.) Thus where the OT is talking about a relationship with God that "has the character of a relationship of grace, that is to say, it is founded on a primal act in history, maintained on definite conditions and protected by a powerful divine Guardian," it can be reckoned to be talking about a covenant relationship whether or not it uses the word berith. On this basis covenant can be seen as providing the framework for OT theology. Likewise one could term the description of the mutual relationship between Yahweh and Israel in passages such as Jer 7:23; 24:7; 30:22 "the covenant formula" even though there is no explicit reference to the covenant in the context. Thus different theologians can both affirm and deny that the idea of covenant dominates the OT, and both can be right, depending on whether they are talking about covenant in the broader or narrower sense. Israel itself may have thought in covenant terms even when it did not use this language. In Neh 9–10, e.g., some commentators describe the people as a making a covenant, even though the text uses the word covenant only in connection with Yahweh's covenant-making and covenant-keeping (Neh 9:8, 32); it describes the community as making an "agreement" (NRSV) or "pledge" (JPS translation; ʾamanah [אֲמָנָה]; KJV has "sure covenant"). The prophets, too, refer to "covenant" rather infrequently; it is a matter of guesswork why this is so. But they, too, in the broader sense think in covenant terms, and this may lie behind the way they sometimes imply that they are issuing a formal charge against the people, accusing them of covenant-breaking, and warning that covenant sanctions are to be imposed on them. Yahweh thus has a riv (רִיב), "indictment"or "controversy," against the people (Hos 4:1; 12:2; Mic 6:2). The form of speech would correspond to the way an imperial power brought a charge of disloyalty against one of its underlings and threatened it with punitive action. If there is a connection with covenant thinking, then this prophetic lawsuit might also be described as a covenant lawsuit.

The key theological issue that covenant raises is the relationship between divine commitment and human obligation. Covenant can put the stress on divine initiative and commitment, though it will then regard human obedience as absolutely required. Or it can put the stress on human commitment to obedience to an obligation set forth by God, though it will assume that this commitment is offered in the context of the framework of divine grace. Or it can hold these two in balance in the way marriage does; Yahweh initiates the covenant but it becomes properly operative only when humanity responds to "Yahweh's covenant." The dynamic tension between these ways of looking at the matter means God can never be taken for granted but can always be appealed to.

E. Covenant as a Term for the Basis of Community Life

The notion of covenant emphasizes the relational and communal aspect to life, expressed in human relationships and in humanity's relationship with the rest of creation. We do not live to ourselves but in mutual commitment. It has been argued that there is a close connection between covenant and "steadfast love" (khesedh [חֶסֶד]; see KHESED; LOVE IN THE OT). Yahweh is one "keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants" (1 Kgs 8:23; 2 Chr 6:14; Neh 1:5; 9:32; Ps 89:28; Dan 9:4), and khesedh is the kind of commitment that people show one another when they are in covenant. One could extend this to other classic Hebrew expressions for community values such as those listed as characteristics of Yahweh in connection with the remaking of the covenant in Exod 34:6-7. On the basis of the conviction that our human action in covenant is an imitation of God's action in covenant, one could reckon that these are the qualities of human covenantal living. On political covenants, see ALLIANCE.

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MATERIALISM. 1) A philosophy or theology of the role of material possessions in a person's life; 2) ultimate allegiance or worship directed toward material possessions; 3) the belief that the material universe is all that exists. As a collection of theistic books, the Bible categorically denies 3) and condemns 2). Its treatment of 1) proves far more diverse.

Genesis 1 stresses that God's initial creation was good. Only through human sin did the material world become corrupt (chap. 3). The rest of Scripture outlines a plan of redemption, not only for humanity but also for the whole universe. The patriarchal age portrays several righteous rich people (Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Job), but each is generous in giving to the needy (Gen 13; 14:20, 23; 31:38-42; 41:57; Job 29:12-16). The Mosaic law enshrines private property as desirable (Num 26), but focuses five times as much attention on safeguards against the idolatrous use of possessions. The whole sacrificial system requires giving up one's best (Lev 1–9). Various laws forbid unjust interest (Exod 22:25-27; Deut 23:19-20) and work on the Sabbath, sabbatical year, or Jubilee (Exod 23:10-12; Lev 25:1-7). Taxes, tithes, and offerings likewise prevented the Israelites from becoming as rich as they might have (Exod 30:13; Lev 27:30-33; Deut 14:22-29). Related laws involved justice for the poor—via gleaning, treating aliens like citizens, charging sliding-scale prices based on one's income, not taking one's livelihood as a pledge, paying wages on time, and showing impartiality in the law courts.

The wilderness wanderings led to a manna economy in which no one had either too little or too much (Exod 16:16-18). In the Deuteronomistic material, economics in the promised land proceed according to a theology of rewards and punishments. The more the nation, and esp. its leaders, obey God, the more they enjoy peace and prosperity. The more they disobey, the sooner God brings scarcity and warfare. The wisdom literature reveals three approaches to economic stratification: 1) wealth as the blessing for righteousness, and poverty as the punishment for wickedness (Ps 112; Prov 10:3; 21:5); 2) ill-gotten gain producing innocent victims (Ps 73; Prov 16:15-17; Eccl 5:8-9); and 3) "neither riches nor poverty" as a golden mean (Prov 30:8-9).

The prophets denounce the economic sins of Israel and its leaders: worshiping costly idols (Isa 2:7-8), exalting the Temple cult above basic morality (Jer 7:4-7), oppressing the poor (Amos 5:11-12), boasting in their wealth (Amos 4:1; 6:4-6), and performing ministry primarily for remuneration (Mic 3:11). Instead, the people need to seek justice for the marginalized (Mic 6:8), give all their tithes (Mal 3:8-10), and lament (Lamentations). Rather than fight their exilic oppressors, the people were to seek the welfare of Babylon in order that it too might prosper (Jer 29:7). Ultimately, they could look forward to restoration, which included material prosperity in the land (Isa 60–66). Apocryphal texts focus less on judgment against Israel, and more on the diverse themes of the Wisdom literature, the Deuteronomic rationale for prosperity and poverty, and hope for coming restoration.

New Testament texts do not promise health or wealth based on faith, much like the theologies of the authors of texts like Job or Ecclesiastes. In the tradition of the prophets, the NT authors condemn people who mistreat outcasts and the powerless. No economic system emerges; centuries later, both capitalism and socialism would draw on a variety of scriptural texts and themes (along with other sources).

The Gospels find Jesus blessing the materially and spiritually poor (Matt 5:3; Luke 4:16-21; 6:20), assuming almsgiving (Matt 5:42; 6:1-4; Luke 6:30), and commanding his followers to pray for only daily bread (Matt 6:11; Luke 11:3), while storing up heavenly treasure (Matt 6:19-34; Luke 12:33-34). The only NT reference to tithing is in the context of "woes" pronounced on religious leaders whom Jesus accuses of valuing the gift of money more than they value justice and the love of God (Matt 23:23; Luke 11:41-42). While Jesus pays the religious tax, he does so in a way to show that he and his disciples should be free from it (Matt 17:24-27). Political taxes must be paid but they are relativized by what God

is owed (Mark 12:15-17; compare Rom 13:7-8). Three parables warn against the dangers of trusting in riches versus being good stewards of them (Luke 12:13-21; 16:1-13, 19-31). A trio of texts in close proximity in Luke demonstrates three different ways to exercise that stewardship: giving all to the poor (Luke 18:18-30); giving up half (19:1-10); and making more money but recognizing it is all the master's (19:11-27). The sinful woman's lavish anointing of Jesus (Luke 7:36-50) contrasts a one-time "splash out" in Christ's service with the regular pattern of helping the needy around the world, particularly in Christian circles (Matt 25:31-46). Giving versus hoarding, in the context of discipleship, can also have eternal consequence (Mark 8:36; 12:41-44).

Acts offers three different models for helping the needy: communal sharing (2:42-47; 4:32–5:11); periodic distributions from a "deacons' fund" (6:1-6); and a one-time collection for special needs (11:27-30). All are appropriate under different circumstances; none is absolutized. The letters of Paul show apostolic unity on helping the poor (Gal 2:10); a concern to abolish abusive patron-client relationships (1 Cor 9:18; Phil 4:10-20; 1 Thess 5:14; 2 Thess 3:6-15); a call to proportionate, sacrificial giving (Rom 15:24-27; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8–9); and warnings against the love of money balanced with promises of God's provision of all good things for our enjoyment (1 Tim 6:3-10, 17-19).

The letter of James warns against "the great reversal" (1:9-11); economic favoritism (2:1-7); worthless faith without stewardship (2:14-17); and withholding wages from day laborers (5:1-6). Instead it enjoins trust in the Lord, denunciation of injustice, and seeking his will (4:13-17; 5:7-11). First John 3:16-18 stresses the care true love displays for the materially needy. Revelation contrasts the destruction of the enormously wealthy evil end-times empire with the holy city of earthly delights in the new earth. (Rev 18; 21–22). God's initial purposes of a perfect material universe are finally achieved.

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ARAM, ARAMEANS air´uhm, air´uh-mee´uhn [אֲרָם ʾaram, אֲרַמִּי ʾarammi]. Semitic peoples who inhabited areas from the Middle Euphrates in Mesopotamia to the Orontes River and DAMASCUS in central and southern SYRIA. They were particularly active from ca. 1200–730 BCE. They never formed a unified kingdom but primarily existed as independent states that were loosely connected by language and culture.

In the OT, "Aram" stands as part of the compound names of particular kingdoms. The texts most commonly use the label Aram, however, to designate those peoples living immediately north of Israel and east of the Jordan River. The Bible presents the Arameans as having close cultural and political relationships with Israel, relationships that often oscillate between friendly and unfriendly. During the monarchical period (esp. 900–730 BCE), the Aramean kingdom of Damascus became one of the most powerful states in Syria-Palestine. In the OT literature relating to these years, Aram most frequently designates this kingdom in particular.

A. Sources
   1. Biblical texts
   2. Extra-biblical texts and archaeological data
B. Origins and Early History (pre-10th cent. BCE)
C. Arameans, Israelites, and Assyrians (10th–8th cent. BCE)
D. Culture and Religion

Bibliography

A. Sources

Sources of information for the Arameans include: biblical texts, consisting of scattered references and allusions; extra-biblical texts, including Aramaic, Assyrian, and Egyptian inscriptions; and archaeological data, including cultural artifacts and material remains.

1. Biblical texts

One of the OT's clearest, and perhaps most ancient, confessions of Israelite faith explicitly presents a historic connection between Israelites and Arameans: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor" (Deut 26:5). Genesis 10:22, a text within the priestly table of nations, identifies Aram as a son of Shem, while Gen 22:21 presents Aram's origin as a grandson of Nahor, the brother of Abraham. Drawing upon different traditions, 1 Chr 7:34 introduces Aram as a son of Shemer, a descendant of Asher, while Amos 9:7 declares that the Lord brought the Arameans up from "Kir." Passages that associate the patriarchs and matriarchs with Arameans in the area of Haran (e.g., Bethuel in Gen 25:20 and Laban in Gen 31:20) further depict a connection between Aram and Israel.

The OT includes numerous other references to persons and events associated with Aram, as well as to historical interactions among Israel, Judah, and various Aramean kingdoms. Apart from some references to relatives of Isaac and Jacob in Gen 24 and 29, the obscure figure of "Cushan-rishathaim of Aram-Naharaim" in Judg 3, and occasional mentions within some prophetic books (e.g., Isa 7:2, 4-5; Jer 35:11; Ezek 16:57), the majority of references to Aram appear in Samuel and Kings, with par. in 1 and 2 Chronicles. These references describe the interactions of various Aramean states and rulers with Israelite and Judean kings from Saul and David to Ahaz and Hoshea.

2. Extra-biblical texts and archaeological data

Extrabiblical non-Aramaic sources predominantly consist of Assyrian royal inscriptions, with some sporadic mentions in Egyptian and Ugaritic texts. The name "Damascus" appears, e.g., in the Amarna letters (COS 3.93:243), and references to Arameans occur in Ugaritic texts in personal names and in the designation "fields of the Arameans." The Assyrian royal inscriptions provide the first incontestable references to the Arameans in the annals of Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076 BCE). These describe the king's battles with Arameans living to the southwest of Assyria (ANET 275). The annals of Tiglath-pileser's son, Ashur-bel-kala (1073–1056 BCE), contain similar references. Assyrian descriptions of the Arameans also occur from the time of Ashur-dan II (934–912 BCE) through that of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE), Shalmaneser III (858–824 BCE), Adad-nirari III (810–783 BCE), and Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BCE).

There are few documents from the Arameans themselves. These are not royal annals such as one finds in Assyria, nor king lists and chronicles such as one finds in Babylonia. Instead, nearly all the major sources are occasional royal inscriptions that come from the 9th cent. BCE.

Three of the most significant Aramaic texts come from the 9th cent. reign of Hazael, king of Aram Damascus. The Tel Dan Inscription (COS 2.39:161-62), a memorial stela discovered in the early 1990s, likely records Hazael's victories over Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah of the "House of David," though the latter has been vigorously debated. Hazael's booty inscriptions (COS 2.40:162-63)—two inscribed ivory plaques taken by the Assyrians as booty to Arslan-Tash (near Til Barsip) and Nimrud and an inscribed bronze ornament for a horse's head taken as booty to the Greek island of Samos—attest to Hazael's military campaigns.

From later in the 9th cent. or early in the 8th cent. comes the inscription of Zakkur king of Hamath and Lush (COS 2.35:155), which records his successful resistance against a coalition led by Hazael's son Ben-Hadad. The Melqart Stela (COS 2.33:152-53), a royal inscription erected by a king named Ben-Hadad, dedicated to the god Melqart, and found north of Aleppo, may also describe the efforts of Ben-Hadad son of Hazael to maintain control of territories north of Damascus, but scholars are divided over whether the king named in this text is Aramean or not (Mazar, 112). The Sefire Treaties (COS 2.82:213-17), found just south of Aleppo, date from the mid-8th cent. BCE and represent the longest extant inscription in Old Aramaic. They describe a treaty between the king of Arpad and the king of the uncertain locale, "KTK."

Archaeological remains from Aramean, Israelite, and other territories also contribute to our knowledge of the Arameans. Additionally, portrayals of Aramean people appear on gates and walls of Assyrian and Aramean buildings.

B. Origins and Early History (pre-10th cent. BCE)

The question of Aramean origins and early history involves the years leading up to and including the 12th–11th cent. BCE. Their emergence coincides at the latest with changes in Syria-Palestine at the end of the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1200 BCE). Since the Arameans existed as loosely connected territorial kingdoms in various geographical areas, they at times evidence different origins and development. Particularly lacking is archaeological data for the material conditions in Syria and Mesopotamia that accompanied the rise of the Arameans. Hence, reconstruction must rely mainly upon textual references.

As described above, the OT preserves at least four traditions concerning the origins of the Arameans (Gen 10:22; 22:21; Amos 9:7; 1 Chr 7:34) and places Arameans in Haran as early as the time envisioned

for Abraham and Isaac (ca. 2000 BCE). While some scholars maintain that these associations with Haran fit some contexts in Israelite history, biblical traditions of Aramean origins, especially those in the genealogies of Genesis, likely represent the OT's practice of relating all ethnic groups through common ancestry. They probably do not provide precise genealogical information concerning Aramean origins.

Possible references in non-Assyrian texts, which would describe pre-12th cent. origins, remain contested. Some scholars identify references to the names "Aram" and "Aramu" in 3rd-millennium texts from Ebla, but these groups seem to be located in upper Mesopotamia, east of the Tigris. A potential reference occurs on an Egyptian statue base from Thebes as early as the time of Amenophis III, and Ugaritic texts from the 14th cent. may contain gentilics for Aram.

A central issue related to the origins of the Arameans concerns their connection with other groups mentioned in texts from before the 12th cent. Tiglath-pileser I links the Arameans with the "Akhlamu." The earliest use of this term for a population group stands in the Amarna letters, but it may also appear in texts from Mari and Ugarit. In the Assyrian texts, Akhlamu designates a seminomadic group on the fringes of Syrian and Mesopotamian society. Due to the geographical similarities and Assyrian pairings, many scholars see the Arameans as identical with or at least as a subgroup of the Akhlamu. If this identification is correct, it points to an origin for the Arameans in at least the Middle Bronze Age. This conclusion remains questionable, however, since some texts include references to both Akhlamu and Arameans independently, and Mesopotamian texts in general often pair the names of nomadic groups without suggesting identification.

The evidence favors the conclusion that the Arameans gradually emerged in Mesopotamia and Syria during the Late Bronze Age, at least 200 years before their initial encounters with Tiglath-pileser I. Scholars remain divided, however, over whether the Arameans were nomads who migrated into this region from the Syrian desert or pastoralist descendants of Amorite groups who had lived in Syria since the 18th cent. The older view—that the Arameans flooded into the region during a time of upheaval around 1250 BCE—has been challenged more recently for relying on an overly simplistic view of the development of nomadic groups into urban cultures and for lacking archaeological evidence for the displacement of populations around this time. The extrabiblical texts do not portray the Arameans as immigrants, and later Arameans occupy the same area as the earlier Amorites. In any case, Arameans filled the vacuum created by the collapse of the Hittite empire in approximately 1250 BCE.

For the remainder of the 12th and 11th cent.—the period of Aramean expansion following their initial emergence—information is sparse, especially for southern Syria. When the sources resume in the mid-10th cent., a variety of Aramean territorial states are in place around the Orontes River, Beqaʿ Valley, and northern Transjordan. While the Assyrian texts designate the groups in the Babylon area with the general term Arameans, they assume the political and geographical independence of the Syrian states and identify them by the specific names of the individual kingdoms.

C. Arameans, Israelites, and Assyrians (10th–8th cent. BCE)

Aramean history in the 10th–8th cent. unfolded in the context of the Assyrian Empire, and knowledge of it predominantly comes from Assyrian sources. By the beginning of the 10th cent., biblical and Assyrian texts describe conflicts of Israel and Assyria with several centralized states in Syria and upper Mesopotamia. The states included Bit-Adini, Arpad, Hamath, Aram-Zobah (see ZOBAH), and Geshur.

Early information on the Aramean states in central and southern Syria is limited to the OT. Aram Zobah, located in the Beqaʿ Valley north of Damascus, was the most powerful Aramean state in the 11th–10th

cent. and fought with Israel as early as the time of Saul (1 Sam 14:47). Second Samuel 10:6-19 says that David defeated a group of Arameans from Beth-rehob, Zobah, and Maccah, which had been hired by the Ammonites, and subsequently defeated another Aramean coalition led by Hadadezer, king of Zobah. In 2 Sam 8:3-12, perhaps a summary of 10:6-19 or perhaps a misplaced description of later battles, David struck down Hadadezer of Zobah, defeated the Arameans of Damascus who came to Hadadezer's aid, and placed garrisons in Damascus. If these traditions are in any way reliable, they provide the earliest OT references to a powerful Aramean kingdom and its interactions with Israel.

The OT's texts about Solomon then describe the emergence of Damascus in the 10th cent. as the primary Aramean kingdom in southern Syria. First Kings 11:23-25 indicates that Rezon broke away from Hadadezer of Zobah and became king in Damascus. Since there is no clear archaeological evidence for the arrival of the Arameans in Damascus, this tradition remains unconfirmed. Even if historical, it is unclear whether Rezon took Damascus away from Israel, Zobah, or Edom. In any case, the biblical texts depict Rezon as the ruler of Damascus in the third quarter of the 10th cent. and as a persistent adversary throughout Solomon's reign.

First Kings 15:18 gives the names of Rezon's successors throughout the rest of the 10th cent.: Hezion followed by Tab-Rimmon. King Asa of Judah's remark to a later Aramean king concerning a previous alliance between "my father and your father" (1 Kgs 15:19) may indicate that relations between Israel and Aram Damascus fluctuated between hostile and cooperative in the last half of the 10th cent. The available sources for Damascus between the mid-10th and mid-9th cent., however, are mainly limited to sporadic biblical references, which may be later and misplaced, with some Assyrian references. By the late 10th cent., Assyrian activity in the west began to reemerge under Assur-dan II (932–910 BCE) apparently to check any potential Aramean expansion.

The next major intersection of Israelite and Aramean history occurred during the reigns of Baasha of Israel and Asa of Judah (ca. 900 BCE). According to 1 Kgs 15:16-21, Ben-Hadad I, son of Tab-Rimmon, attacked Basha after Asa convinced him to break a standing alliance with Israel. The Aramean king then captured several cities in northern Israel. The biblical texts provide the only sources for these events, but a destruction layer in Stratum IV at Tell al-Qadi that dates to the first quarter of the 9th cent. may attest to the conquest. Outside of these events, Aramean activities in central and southern Syria during the first half of the 9th cent. are obscure. By the time sufficient biblical and Assyrian sources reemerge (ca. 860 BCE), Aram Damascus, under its new king Hadadezer (Adad-idri), stands as the major power in the west.

In 859–858 BCE, Shalmaneser III became king of Assyria. He campaigned against Bit-Adini and northern Syria from 858–855 BCE. Shortly thereafter (853–852 BCE), Shalmaneser encountered a south Syrian-Palestinian coalition led by Hadadezer of Damascus and including Ahab of Israel (see Monolith Inscription; COS 2.113A:261-64). The coalition met the Assyrians at Qarqar on the Orontes River and apparently stalled or defeated Shalmaneser, since Assyrian texts record no booty being taken and Shalmaneser pushes no farther west. This alliance fought Shalmaneser on three more occasions between 853 and 845 BCE, apparently scoring a victory or stalemate each time, and the Assyrian texts consistently picture Aram Damascus as the leading western power.

Assyrian texts portray Israel as an ally of Hadadezer during the reign of Ahab. The biblical materials concerning Ahab, however, esp. 1 Kgs 20 and 22, make no mention of the battle of Qarqar, identify the Aramean king contemporary with Ahab as BEN-HADAD, not Hadadezer, and depict Israel and Aram as enemies during this period. Some scholars identify the Ben-Hadad in 1 Kgs 20 and 22 with Hadadezer and conclude that relations between Israel and Aram oscillated during the reigns of Omri and Ahab.

Evidence for such hostilities during the time of Omri may appear in the Tel Dan Inscription's reference to a previous (pre–841 BCE) Israelite invasion of Aram Damascus, an invasion for which there is no confirming evidence (COS 2.39:161-62). Because of chronological and textual problems, the majority of interpreters conclude that 1 Kgs 20 and 22 are redactionally misplaced and actually refer to hostilities with an Aramean king Ben-Hadad in the later Jehu. Thus, all evidence points to Israelite and Aramean cooperation throughout the reign of Hadadezer of Damascus (ca. 880–843 BCE).

The situation changed in 843 BCE when Hazael took the throne of Aram Damascus. The Assyrian texts identified him as an usurper, who took control of Damascus upon the death of Hadadezer, and 2 Kgs 8:7-15 depicted him as murdering his predecessor, who is incorrectly identified as Ben-Hadad.

The reign of Hazael was the apex of Aram Damascus's power. Shortly after Hazael's accession, likely as a result of his aggression, fighting broke out between Israel and Aram at Ramoth-Gilead (2 Kgs 8:28-29; 9:14b-15a). Second Kings 9–10 then describe the takeover of the Samarian government by Jehu, who killed the kings of Israel and Judah. The Tel Dan Inscription, probably a memorial stela of Hazael, likely reflects these events, although the fragmentary stela attributes the killing of Jehoram and Ahaziah to the Aramean king and many of its details remain debated. Not long after these events, the Assyrians under Shalmaneser III moved westward to quell Hazael's expansion. Probably because of his local aggression, Hazael faced Assyria without a coalition. For 841 BCE, Assyrian texts recorded a campaign against Hazael alone in which Shalmaneser forced him to retreat but was unable to capture Damascus, although he did destroy the surrounding lands, cities, and villages. In the course of the campaign, Shalmaneser received tribute from Jehu of Israel, marking his submission to Assyria as a vassal.

Hazael survived further Assyrian campaigns in 838 and 837 BCE. Following the 837 campaign, however, Assyria entered a period of decline during the last four years of Shalmaneser (828–824 BCE) and the first three years of Shamshi-Adad (824–822 BCE). Hence, the three decades following 837 BCE saw no Assyrian campaigns to the west.

In the vacuum created by Assyria's weakness, Aram Damascus was able to expand unchecked. Biblical and extrabiblical texts suggest that Hazael constructed an Aramean empire that lasted into the reign of his successor (Ben-Hadad), that controlled all of Syria-Palestine, and that subjugated Israel and Judah. Yet the exact nature and extent of this empire remain contested. Extrabiblical sources such as the Tel Dan Inscription claim the Aramean king's ability to kill kings of Israel and Judah. Similarly, the Zakkur Stela points to Aramean influence in Hamath. Hazael's booty inscriptions refer to the king's crossing of the "river" and may indicate that Hazael even conducted offensive campaigns into Assyrian territory north of the Euphrates. Archaeological evidence of destruction at places like Jezreel also points to Aramean encroachment into the upper Jordan Valley.

Biblical texts relating to the reigns of Jehoahaz of Israel and Joash and Amaziah of Judah also indicate that Aramean hegemony reached unparalleled heights at this time. Second Kings 13:3 reports succinctly, "The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, so that he gave them repeatedly into the hand of King Hazael of Aram, then into the hand of Ben-Hadad son of Hazael." Second Kings 10:32-33 associates Israel's loss of territory in the Transjordan with Hazael's expansion, and 2 Kgs 12:17a suggests that Hazael subjugated the Philistine city of Gath and virtually all of the land west of the Jordan. The only major event reported by the biblical writers for the reign of Joash of Judah is that Hazael threatened Jerusalem and Joash paid him tribute not unlike a vassal (2 Kgs 12:17-18).

The available evidence suggests that Hazael at least dominated Israel and Judah and likely established an empire that included some Philistine kingdoms, Transjordan kingdoms, Tyre, and perhaps areas north

of the Euphrates. Some scholars have questioned key points such as the identity of the entities on and implications of Hazael's booty inscriptions, and pointed out that other states in northern and central Syria did not cease to exist. It is a fair warning not to overstate the power of Damascus on the basis of its dominance over Israel. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to conclude that Israel and Judah, and likely others, became vassal states to Aram Damascus. If 1 Kgs 20:14-15, 24 reflect conditions under the Jehu dynasty (see above), the "governors of the districts" and the "commanders" that replace kings—a system of organization previously unknown in Israel—may indicate that Hazael divided his dominated territories into administrative districts, of which Samaria would have been one.

At the end of the years 837–810 BCE, the Assyrian king Adad-nirari III (810–783 BCE) led a resurgence of Assyrian strength in the west. Although the date of Hazael's death is unknown, 2 Kgs 13:22 links it with the death of Jehoahaz of Israel and thus places it in the general timeframe of Assyria's resurgence (ca. 805 BCE). Extrabiblical Aramaic and Assyrian texts, as well as biblical texts (2 Kgs 6:24–7:20; 13, and probably 1 Kgs 20 and 22), indicate that three major developments took place during the reign of Hazael's son Ben-Hadad: 1) Adad-nirari III attacked Damascus; 2) Ben-Hadad suffered defeat north of Damascus; and 3) Israel threw off the Aramean yoke south of Damascus. The sources do not, however, yield certainty on the chronology of these events. Perhaps as early as 803 or as late as 796 BCE, the Assyrians attacked Damascus and collected tribute from Ben-Hadad (referred to in Assyrian texts with the title "marʾi," "lord"; compare Sabaʾa stela [COS 2.114E:274-75] and Rimah stela [COS 2.114F:275-76]). Before or after this confrontation, the Zakkur Stela recorded that Ben-Hadad unsuccessfully led a coalition of kings against Zakkur, king of Hamath and Lush, likely due to the latter's alliance with Assyria and the former's desire to maintain the Aramean control of the north.

The Arameans suffered similar losses to Israel. Second Kings 13:5 attributes Israel's escape from Aramean dominance to the coming of a "savior" sent by God; this could be a veiled reference to Adad-nirari III's return to the west. After paying tribute to reconfirm their pro-Assyrian status (see Rimah Stela), Israel scored at least three victories over Ben-Hadad (2 Kgs 13–14), although scholars continue to debate whether Jehoahaz or Joash should be credited with these victories.

There are no extant Aramean sources that indicate how long Ben-Hadad remained on the throne or what happened in the latter part of his reign. Following its resurgence under Adad-nirari III, Assyria experienced another period of decline from 782–745 BCE. Initially, however, this period afforded no opportunity for Aramean expansion. Control of the west remained in the hands of the powerful Assyrian governor Shamshi-ilu, who operated out of Bit-Adini. Assyrian texts indicate that Shamshi-ilu led another campaign against Damascus in 773–772 BCE. The king of Damascus at the time was Hadianu (ca. 775–750 BCE; see Pazarcik Stela; COS 2.114B:273), who was perhaps rebelling against Assyria but about whom nothing else is known. Additionally, 2 Kgs 14:28 says that Jeroboam II (788–748 BCE) dominated Damascus and Hamath, although the historical reliability and details of this claim remain vexing for scholars.

The death of Shamshi-ilu not long after 752–751 BCE removed any strong sense of Assyrian presence in the west, provided Aram Damascus another opportunity to assert dominance in Syria-Palestine, and ushered in the final era of power in Aramean history. Both Assyrian and biblical texts introduce Rezin (Aramaic, "Radyan"), the next king of Damascus, as the dominant political force in the area, who attempted to reestablish Hazael's earlier empire. Little is known of Rezin's reign before ca. 740 BCE, when he begins to appear in Assyrian annals. Yet 2 Kgs 15:37 and 16:6 suggest that Rezin encroached on Israelite territory as early as the final years of Jeroboam II, and the prophetic oracle against Damascus in Amos 1:3-5, which describes an Aramean invasion of Galilee, may date from this time

(ca. 750 BCE). Contemporary Assyrian inscriptions credit Rezin with an extended domain of the “house of Hazael” (COS 2.117F:291).

The course of events changed in 744 BCE when Tiglath-pileser III took the throne of Assyria. He immediately undertook a series of campaigns and annexations designed to reestablish Assyrian control over the far reaches of the empire. He first recaptured territories in northern Syria like Arpad and Hamath (ca. 738 BCE). Although Rezin is recorded as paying tribute to Tiglath-pileser as early as 738 (COS 2.117A:284), this action should probably be seen as a nominal tribute designed to buy time, since Assyria remained occupied in the north. Throughout this same period, Rezin worked to construct a widespread, anti-Assyrian coalition to challenge the resurgent Tiglath-pileser and push for economic freedom from Assyria. Pekah of Israel apparently played a key part in these developments. Chronological difficulties with Pekah’s reign suggest the possibility that he emerged as an Aramean-supported rival king, perhaps based in Gilead, in league with Rezin and his anti-Assyrian movement as early as the time of Jeroboam II. The various Assyrian lists of states that paid tribute and were subjugated during these years suggest that Rezin’s coalition included Tyre, Ashkelon, Arabia, Gaza, and Israel.

When Pekah, probably with the support of Rezin, seized the throne in Samaria in 734 BCE (2 Kgs 15:25), the Northern Kingdom took its place among the rebellious states opposing Assyria’s resurgence and precipitated a conflict between Damascus, Israel, and Judah referred to as the “Syro-Ephraimitic War” (734–731 BCE). Judah, under King Ahaz, refused to follow the Northern Kingdom’s lead and pursued an independent course, an action that prompted a joint Israelite and Aramean siege of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 16:1-18; 2 Chr 28:1-25; Isa 7:1-17).

The attack on Jerusalem would prove to be Aram Damascus’s last significant action. Although the precise sequence of these events remains debated, Tiglath-pileser III moved down the Mediterranean coast and attacked Philistia in 734–733 BCE before moving against Arabia and Tyre. These actions were followed by a decisive, two-year siege and capture of Damascus (733–731 BCE). Assyrian texts recorded the capture of 591 towns, the destruction of Damascus, the execution of Rezin, the deportation of parts of the population, and the provincialization of Aramean territories (ANET 283). This destruction marked the disappearance of an independent Aram Damascus from the stage of history.

Following the Syro-Ephraimitic war, Aramean groups intersected only briefly with Israelite history during the final years of the Northern Kingdom. In 720 BCE, Ilu-biʾdi of Hamath led a coalition that challenged Assyrian dominance and included the city of Samaria. The new Assyrian king, Sargon II, quickly suppressed the revolt, and his actions marked the end of the main course of Aramean history in Syria Palestine. Aramean groups remained a significant political factor in the years after 720 BCE only in Babylonia. While Arameans in this area appear as rebels in the texts of Sennacherib (704–681 BCE), even they eventually assimilated into other population elements.

Throughout the following centuries, Damascus played a role as a provincial capital in the Persian period, an important city in the Hellenistic period, and a Nabatean capital in the Roman period. Indeed, various Aramean cities went on to have a storied history, yet they never again attained the political power they knew across the first six centuries of the Iron Age.

D. Culture and Religion

Because the Arameans existed as several groups in different areas, there was not a single Aramean culture. Adequate sources for fully reconstructing social, economic, and domestic life have not survived. Available texts depict an economy that mainly consisted of farming and animal husbandry, with some industry controlled by the royal administration. The clearest sources (registry documents from Haran) reveal a family structure that was patriarchal, with child care and food preparation as women's primary activities. The Aramean groups in the east seem to have maintained a more tribal structure, while the western Arameans developed territorial states governed by dynastic monarchies.

Perhaps also due to their diversity, Aramean groups made few lasting contributions to the culture of the ancient Near East. Nearly all their material culture—art, architecture, metalwork, etc.—was adapted from older traditions or contemporary neighbors. The primary cultural impact of the Arameans was the Aramiac language. By the mid-8th cent. Aramaic was the official diplomatic language of the Assyrian Empire, and some texts in the OT, most notably parts of Ezra and Daniel, are in Aramaic. Aramaic became a common spoken language in the Neo-Babylonian period and later the lingua franca of the Persian Empire. The language survived in various dialects into the Roman period, probably constituting the language spoken by Jesus of Nazareth.

Aramean religion shared the tradition and gods of broader West Semitic religion. The god Hadad was the main deity for many groups, especially for Aram Damascus, and was attested in both biblical and extrabiblical texts. The texts connected Hadad with the name "Raman" ("Thunderer"), which appears in the OT as "Rimmon" (2 Kgs 5:18; Zech 12:11). This is the only Aramean god to appear in the OT, although a stela at Bethsaida apparently venerates Hadad, and a sanctuary dedicated to Aramean gods has been discovered at Megiddo.

Hadad was a god of rain and thunderstorm, who was connected with fertility, yet neither biblical nor extrabiblical sources preserved a developed mythology for the deity. Ugaritic and Amarna texts mentioned a god called "Baʿlu-Haddu," and this deity may have functionally become two by the 1st millennium. Various Aramean texts invoked the names of other deities, notably the moon god Sin and Baal Shamayn. The veneration of Aramean gods included the practice of prophecy and the rite of funerary meals. See ARAM-MAACAH; ARAM-NAHARAIM; PADDAN-ARAM.

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BRAD E. KELLE

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BABYLON, OT bab´uh-luhn [בָּבֶל levab]. City in southern Mesopotamia, located on a branch of the Euphrates, 59 mi. (90 km) southwest of Baghdad. Babylon rose to prominence early in the 2nd millennium BCE, as the region experienced significant sociopolitical changes, and became the capital of important political entities throughout various periods of ANE history, playing a significant role in Israelite history and ideology. The name Babylon, and several ideas associated with it, were transported to the West by means of the OT, and subsequently the NT and classical authors.

A. The Name "Babylon"
B. Archaeological Data
C. Political History
D. Babylon and the Old Testament

Bibliography

A. The Name "Babylon"

Babylon went by a variety of names in antiquity. The earliest form of the toponym appears to have been babil(a), which has neither Sumerian nor Akkadian origin, and so perhaps derives ultimately from the population inhabiting Mesopotamia before the Sumerians, the so-called proto-Euphratean population. Although the meaning of this early name for the city is long since lost to antiquity, it appears to have given rise to an Akkadian form, created through popular etymology, babilim, "Gate of God," and a Sumerian equivalent, ka-dingirra, also meaning "Gate of God." It is impossible to be certain which is derivative of the other, but it is more likely that the Akkadian was created by wordplay on the older babil(a), and preceded the Sumerian equivalent. The later plural Akkadian form, babilani, "Gate of the Gods," became ōnolybaB (Βαβυλών) in Greek, resulting in the modern name "Babylon." Several literary names for the city, such as ikritnit, probably became popular in the 12th cent. BCE. The toponym was eventually used to designate the greater region of southern Mesopotamia, or "Babylonia," in what is today southern Iraq, Kuwait, and parts of western Iran.

B. Archaeological Data

Babylon was located in Mesopotamia, the site of the world's first urban civilization. Many features converged to make urbanization possible, but primary among them was access to the slow-moving water of the Euphrates, and to a lesser extent the Tigris, which makes the alluvial plain of southern Mesopotamia easily irrigable. Urbanization took place in this region in the late 4th and early 3rd millennia BCE. The Euphrates did not flow through a single channel at this time but through several branches along which the most important cities were established. Babylon itself was located along the Araḫtum-branch, which in later texts is identified with the Euphrates itself. We have no textual witness to the city's existence prior to the middle of the 3rd millennium BCE, at which time it had little political significance. Potsherds have been reported from the surface of the site from the mid-3rd millennium BCE.

After centuries of unscientific travelers and researchers visiting the site, scholarly excavations were conducted from 1899 to 1917 by the Deutsche Orientgesellschaft under the direction of Robert Koldewey. The work of the Germans, and subsequent excavations of the city in the 20th cent. were largely limited to the Neo-Babylonian levels because of the rise of ground water, and it has not been possible to do much with deeper and earlier strata. The Neo-Babylonian city yielded a strongly fortified inner and outer circuit of walls made of baked bricks. The outer wall included Nebuchadnezzar's summer palace on the northern part of the mound. The walls were entered by eight gates, each named after a god. One particular city gate, the famed Ishtar Gate, was spectacularly decorated in blue

enameled bricks, serving as a background for alternating red and white dragons symbolizing Marduk, god of Babylon, and bulls, symbolic of Adad. The city center was formed by the temple precinct Esagila, containing the cult rooms of Marduk, his wife, and other gods and goddesses. Religious structures had a square or rectangular courtyard, with a lopsided room to the side through a central entrance followed by a second room, in which stood a podium as the base of the divine statue. Situated just to the north of Esagila was the most famous architectural achievement of ancient Babylon, the temple-tower Etemenanki ("house of the foundation of heaven and earth"), the seven-staged brick "tower of Babel," which had been sought for centuries. German excavators in 1913 uncovered the building's remains, which had been torn down in the time of Alexander the Great. Unfortunately little was left of the monument because of the ancient practice of reusing mud bricks for building materials.

The city contained a number of royal palaces. Nebuchadnezzar built a magnificent new palace late in his reign, the ruins of which contained a museum in which he housed a large collection of "antiquities," including monumental pieces from across northern Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine, revealing the king's interest in archaeology and history. Family dwellings in Babylon's domestic quarter were complex buildings with a large courtyard, entered through a reception room. Outer rooms surrounded the whole courtyard and included annexes and other buildings surrounding the foyer. The ceramic and pottery remains illustrate daily life, as well as thousands of commercial and legal inscriptions on clay tablets. The city's enduring literary legacy is illustrated by the discovery of cuneiform astronomical inscriptions dating late in Babylon's history (approximately 75 ce).

C. Political History

The history of ancient southern Mesopotamia may be periodized according to intermittent empires built with the city of Babylon at their center. The first of these periods is marked by the arrival of the Amorites into central and southern Mesopotamia. Their appearance constitutes a turning point in ancient history at the turn of the 2nd millennium BCE, when Amorite city-states began to supplant the older Sumero-Akkadian culture of the previous millennium. The first dynasty of Babylon was established by Amorites in the 19th cent. BCE and rose to prominence under its sixth ruler, Hammurabi (1792–1750 BCE). At this time, the city of Babylon rose from relative obscurity to become the political center of the country, and then an empire extending for the first time beyond southern Mesopotamia into the northwestern bend of the Euphrates River. This period of Babylon's history as the capital of an empire is known as the Old Babylonian period (2003–1595 BCE).

Near the end of the Old Babylonian period, the role of the Amorites began to wane, and Kassite rulers took up governance of Babylonia for several centuries in what is most conveniently called the Middle Babylonian Period (1595–1155 BCE). During these centuries, the Kassites were only one of numerous ethnolinguistic groups in Babylonia, but they were ready and able to fill the power vacuum created by the collapse of the Old Babylonian dynasty. Kassite nationalism, with a relatively stable economy and political rule, resulted in the elevation of Babylonian culture and prestige across the ancient world in an age of internationalism.

Due to the successes of the Kassite rulers, Babylon came to be venerated as an ancient holy city, an important symbol of power and legitimacy for rulers hoping to dominate the ancient world. During the opening centuries of the 1st millennium, control of the city became the objective of Assyrian kings to the north, who considered Babylon to be the cultural capital of all Mesopotamia. Eventually, a dynasty of native Babylonians (perhaps Chaldeans ethnically) defeated the Assyrians and restored Babylon to a brief period of renewed grandeur. During the 7th and 6th cent. BCE, Babylon rose again to premier international status and enjoyed a spectacular period of strength and prosperity. Although this Neo-

Babylonian Empire (625–539 BCE) may be perceived as a mere interlude between the Assyrians and Persians, the grandeur of the empire, especially under Nebuchadnezzar II, and its legacy in the biblical and classical sources, left an indelible mark on subsequent history, making this one of the most important and interesting periods of ancient Babylonian history (see NEBUCHADNEZZAR, NEBUCHADREZZAR). With the rise of Cyrus, Babylon became a province in the Persian Empire and was eventually taken by Alexander the Great and his successors. During the Hellenistic period, Babylon lost its political supremacy to Seleucia on the Tigris. But throughout its history, even including periods of political weakness, Babylon was significant as a cultural and religious center, whose influence reached across the ancient Near East to the West in Greco-Roman times and came to symbolize all of Eastern culture.

D. Babylon and the Old Testament

The OT contains nearly 300 references to Babylon, the region of Babylonia, or its inhabitants, as well as eighty-nine references to the ethnically precise term "Chaldea/n/s." Because of its international and cultural significance, and its role later in destroying Jerusalem and deporting large portions of its citizens, Babylon came to carry theological significance in the Bible even beyond its obvious historical importance. The city itself came to symbolize ungodly power.

The first references to Babylon in the Bible, and the only ones in the Pentateuch, are found near the conclusion of the Primeval History in the term Babel (Gen 10:10; 11:9). The Tower of Babel episode (Gen 11:1-9) serves as the literary climax of the Primeval History, and traces the vitiating consequences of sin in humankind (Gen 3–11). The tower is to be identified with a Mesopotamian ziggurat, or stepped pyramid, which developed in the early stages of Mesopotamian urbanization. Perhaps because of Babylon's role later in Israel's history or simply because of its cultural significance more generally, the city came to symbolize for the Israelites the worst kind of idolatry, degrading the divine in pagan polytheism. The Tower of Babel narrative concludes in an ironic wordplay. Although Akkadian speakers understood the name of the city as "gate of God," the Israelites knew better. God turned humankind's gate of heaven into confusion: "Therefore it was called Babel [levab], because there the Lord confused [lalab] the language of all the earth" (11:9). In this derogatory interpretation of the city's name, Babylon represents humanity's unified rebellion against God and is therefore marked by confusion, turning the "gate of heaven" into "confusion of speech."

Babylon's historical significance is obvious by the many references in the OT historical books to events in which Babylon plays a central role. Names of specific Babylonians (such as Merodach-baladan, Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, Nebuzaradan, etc.) were once only dimly known through the classical sources, but are now attested in native Babylonian sources and shed considerable light on our understanding of the biblical narratives. Beyond such specifics, the retrieval of native Babylonian sources since the 19th cent. has made it possible to reconstruct, in part, the history of ancient Babylon, giving insight into the general history of this city mentioned so frequently in the historical books.

In addition to these historical connections between Babylon and Israel—and indeed, partly because of these connections—Babylon also plays an important theological and ideological role in the OT. Especially notable in this regard is the pejorative tone adopted so frequently by Israelite prophets when referring to Babylon, a nation used as an instrument of divine wrath against Israel, which destroyed Jerusalem and deported large portions of its citizens. Thus Babylon is referred to by the ancient literary cipher known as ATHBASH, in which "Sheshach" is a cryptogram for "Babylon" in contexts of rebellion and horror, and "Leb-qamai" stands for "Chaldea" (Jer 25:26; 51:1, 41; respectively). Babylonian religion and imperialism come under especially sharp attack in the Hebrew prophetic

literature. From the perspective of the Israelite prophet, Babylon may be compared to Sheol, for just as Sheol's appetite for the dead is insatiable, so is the greed of the Babylonian empire for other nations (Hab 2:5). In Jeremiah, Babylonia is cryptically denoted when Yahweh warns that disaster will break forth "out of the north" (1:14; 6:1, 22-23). The downfall of the king of Babylon is celebrated in Isa 14:4-23 in terms that came to symbolize the destruction of any hostile enemy of God. In Second Isaiah, Babylon is a symbol of the evil oppressor. The role of Babylon in Dan 1–5 is that of a ferocious human empire capable of many atrocities, yet vulnerable and ultimately doomed because of God's opposition. Belshazzar's writing on the wall illustrates the outcome of obstinate royal opposition to God's will (Dan 5). In many poetic passages, Babylon came to represent the place of exile and alienation: "By the river of Babylon—there we sat down and there we wept" (Ps 137:1).

Once Babylon became a literary and ideological type for the ungodly city, other prophetic warnings and judgments concerning wicked cities were applied to it. So, e.g., Tyre is compared to a prostitute in Isa 23:15-18, as is Nineveh in Nah 3:4-5. The NT's image of Babylon as the "mother of whores"—undoubtedly a cipher for Rome (Rev 17:5)—is drawn from such OT associations. See ASSYRIA AND BABYLONIA; EVIL-MERODACH; MERODACH-BALADAN; MESOPOTAMIA; NEBUZARADAN.

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BILL T. ARNOLD

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HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY, OT. More than half of the OT is historiography, broadly defined. These portions of the OT display features expected in history writing, such as characterization, cause-and-effect continuum, plot resolution, etc. They also raise challenges for contemporary readers about the origins of such history writing, the rhetorical nature of Hebrew narratology, and the historicity of events described. Many such challenges are resolved when the distinction between ancient and modern historiography is clarified.

A. Definitions
B. Israelite Historical Literature
C. Origins
D. Methodology

Bibliography

A. Definitions

Historiography is among the most difficult subjects in biblical studies to define, although many have tried. "History" is itself a word needing clarification, and "historiography" is inherently ambiguous. By the latter, do we mean 1) biblical history, i.e., history according to the Bible or 2) Israelite history, the history of ancient Israel derived from modern research (Tsevat 1980)? The distance between the two is a matter of perspective and debate, but for the purposes of this article, "historiography" will relate to the literary compositions of ancient Israelites rather than to modern reconstructions of Israel's history. Beyond this simple distinction, any treatment of history and historiography as they relate to the OT requires further clarification at the outset.

The word history is of Greek origin ("investigations, researches"), and is not itself a biblical term. If we reduce our definitions to simplistic romantic notions prevalent in Western culture, history is made of the events of the past and historiography is the written record of those events. Biblical scholarship has most frequently assumed definitions similar to these, so that Israelite historiography has often been evaluated by criteria assumed of modern historiographers; that is, how accurately and objectively events have been researched and presented. Famously, in the 19th cent., Leopold von Ranke's definition of the discipline of history as an attempt to show "how it really was" took root in the humanities generally. Modern standards of history writing have routinely been applied to ancient authors, assuming the ancients thought about history and wrote history in a way similar to modern historians. Israelite historians were deemed competent or incompetent based upon how exactly they related what happened in the past.

John Van Seters's monograph in 1983 attempted to compare Israelite history writing with that of other peoples of the ancient world (including the Greeks) as a way of studying the nature and origins of history writing in the Bible. The definition he used in his work was that of Johan Huizinga: "History is the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past." From this starting point, Van Seters challenged the assumption that ancient Israelite historians (as well as those of Greece, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Asia Minor) had the same definition of history and history writing as modern scholars. Although others have objected that Van Seters used Huizinga's definition too narrowly, his work has been influential as a corrective to the assumption that biblical authors understood their task as one of telling what happened in the past. Rather, the purpose of Israelite historiography was theological and aetiological, meaning the authors predominantly set out to "render an account" of their national origins. These authors were not concerned with chronological precision or factual details, which is not to say their records are complete fictions, since the essential historicity of Israel's national epic may be accepted as generally accurate (contra Van Seters). Although Van Seters overstated the case, his work

serves as an essential and important corrective, which has placed biblical history writers in their proper perspective as ANE authors, and compels us to read their works on their own terms. In this light, “history” may continue simply to denote events of the past, while “historiography” requires a more nuanced understanding of the purposes and rhetorical techniques of ancient historians writing about those events.

Indeed, rather than historiography as the term is generally used today, we may think of Hebrew narrative as “historiology,” or discourse-history. That is, the authors wrote a discursive account, highly rhetorical in nature, that aimed for dramatic, theological, and religious effect more than for historical precision. All Israelite history writing is intensely historiological. Their view of divinity, and hence their theologizing, was embedded in events of the past, including the conviction that the creator God, identified as national Yahweh, had broken into the world of their ancestors and then into the world of their nation, in order to reveal his nature and to save them as a people from slavery. Since the Enlightenment, it has often been assumed that this Israelite ideology would, of necessity, produce history writing that would be concerned to relate the details and realia of those acts of God with precision or with what we might call today historical accuracy. But the assumption that the ancients wrote a literary type similar to our contemporary historiography is precisely where one goes wrong. Israelite authors of history saw the events they described as more than factual events; they narrated acts of the past as the action and will of God in their national history. This theological dimension makes Israelite history writing, from the start, quite another matter altogether than Enlightenment modes of history and historiography.

B. Israelite Historical Literature

Many books of the OT contain portions that are historical narrative, even though the genre of those books is not primarily historiography. For example, there are long stretches of narrative in Jeremiah, and shorter portions in many of the prophets (e.g., Amos 7:10-15), as well as texts cast in narrative form (Job 1–2). In general, however, Israelite history writing is represented by three expansive narrative complexes, which have been interwoven into the present books of the Bible in diverse ways.

First, an early “Israelite epic history,” tracing Israel’s national origins and early history, has been used in the composition of Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers. The original sources of this epic history have been identified as J (a source referring to God as Yahweh, spelled Jahwe in German, hence “J”), E (a source using the divine title Elohim, hence “E”), and subsequently as JE, but we may conveniently call the latter the Yahwist’s history (see DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS; E, ELOHIST; J, YAHWIST). While much debate continues about the nature (even existence) of the original E document, it is clear that the composite work of the Yahwist was an extensive narrative history of elaborate plot and characterization, which played an important role in the development of historiography in ancient Israel. The date of composition of the Yahwist’s history was hotly contested in the last quarter of the 20th cent., but the evidence points to a date in the 9th–7th cent. BCE on the basis of analogy to inscriptional evidence, both Northwest Semitic and Assyriological (Emerton). This early historiological epic has been interpolated and combined with priestly materials of diverse sorts into the current books of the Pentateuch.

The second extended history is a unified narrative of preconquest sojourn in the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy), conquest of Canaan (Joshua), and the pre-monarchic settlement period (Judges–Samuel) to monarchic Israel (Samuel–Kings). A long-standing scholarly consensus about this Deuteronomistic History (DtrH) has prevailed since Martin Noth’s groundbreaking work of 1943, although many variations of the hypothesis have been offered (see DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY). Against the so-called Göttingen school’s triple redaction or layered-model approach, the simplest and still most

persuasive explanation of DtrH is that it was first composed during the reign of Josiah and subsequently revised with additional amounts of more pessimistic material in the early exile, the so-called "double redaction" approach (Nelson). A few variations of this double redaction approach merit particular attention (such as a proposed Hezekian edition; Halpern and Vanderhoft). Based upon the covenantal theological tenets of the book of Deuteronomy, the DtrH recounted Israel's entrance and settlement in the promised land, development as an independent political entity, and eventual collapse and ruin, first at the hands of the Assyrians and then the Babylonians.

The third narrative complex comes from the post-exilic period, comprising 1–2 Chronicles and Ezra–Nehemiah (the latter taken as one book). We read them together today largely because of the canonical forms, which are tied together by means of the repetition of 2 Chr 36:22-23 in Ezra 1:1-3a. Indeed, for most of the 19th and 20th cent., scholars believed they originally constituted a single composition, the so-called Chronicler's History. In the last quarter of the 20th cent., however, the consensus changed so the prevailing opinion now is that Chronicles and Ezra–Nehemiah were two separate works (even if by the same author), composed independently and combined at a later time (the previous consensus challenged persuasively by Japhet and Williamson). Shared terms and phrases, as well as common ideology, are best explained at the redactional level. Analogous to the composition of the DtrH, it seems likely that different historical works of separate origins have been combined in a connected narrative. Focused primarily on the restoration of Israel and on the importance of temple worship, this narrative complex covered the distant past (1–2 Chr) and the recent past and present (Ezra–Nehemiah).

Israelite historiographic conventions continued in several works of Second Temple Judaism. In particular, 1 Maccabees, probably written around 100 BCE, relies on carefully researched sources, and gives detail to chronological specifics and characterization. Written several decades later, 2 Maccabees is rhetorically quite different, in some ways a "pathetic" history, in that it emphasizes the emotions of its characters and readers, and is thoroughly didactic (Vanderkam). There were also a few Jewish Greek-writing historians, for which we have only fragmentary remains (e.g., Eupolemus), and these reflect a Hellenistic literary genre emerging among other nations, such as the Babylonian Berossus and the Egyptian Manetho (Walter). But the rhetorical dimensions of Jewish historiography came to full fruition in Flavius Josephus (ca. 37–100 ce). Josephus's extensive writings, especially the Jewish War and Jewish Antiquities covered all of Jewish history from creation to the revolt against Rome in the historian's own lifetime (66 ce). Although long portions of Jewish Antiquities are simple paraphrases of the OT, much of his work was based on extensive research and incorporated painstaking detail. For much of the history of Second Temple Judaism, Josephus is our primary and sometimes only resource. His historiographic conventions included speeches that could encapsulate ideas and perspectives permeating the entire work, as in the DtrH (such as King Agippa's speech [J.W. 2.345–401], but he was also influenced by the antiquarian approach of Hellenistic historical traditions, as is more characteristic of Jewish Antiquities (Feldman).

C. Origins

Assuming Van Seters's definitions are valid, it is true that historiographical materials have been preserved from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Hittites, and yet also true that ancient history writing appears first in Israel, and then (but almost simultaneously) in Greece (Van Seters). The question remains, whence this history-writing impulse in ancient Israel, especially when compared and contrasted to Egypt and Mesopotamia, where ideas of history and historiographical materials are present but where genuine history writing does not make an appearance. Instead, differing views of divinity in Israel and the rest of the ANE apparently resulted in different forms and types of historiography (Arnold).

Van Seters concludes the new genre in Greece and Israel made use of various sorts of lists, royal inscriptions, and chronicles, and yet it did not evolve directly from any one of them or a combination of all of them at once. The first history ever written, therefore, according to Van Seters, was the DtrH, combining a number of historiographical genres into a new genre, "history," in order to "render account" of Israel's past in a sense of identity during the exilic and postexilic periods, needed because of the loss of kingship and the democratization of the notion of election. Subsequently, in Van Seters's reconstruction, the Yahwist was composed in order to supplement DtrH by extending the history back in time to the beginning of the world, and the Chronicler was written last, using the previous two, in an attempt to give account of the "kingdom of God" as preserved in the postexilic community (Damrosch). Van Seters has been severely criticized for his misappropriation or misunderstanding of Huizinga's definition of history. Among these critiques are the fact that the Dutch historian did not intend to limit history writing to a nationalistic exercise, and that Van Seters adopts too facilely a reductionistic historicism inappropriate for ANE materials.

Some have assumed Israelite historiography evolved as a historicizing of older poetic epic, the result of a confluence of such epic literature with chronography, which process was underway in Mesopotamia in the second millennium BCE but came to fruition in genuine history writing only in Israel (Damrosch). This Yahwistic history has often been placed in the 9th cent. BCE, while others tenuously assume a 10th cent. date based on the geographical references in Gen 15:18 (and elsewhere): "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates." Others have argued the Hittites introduced historiography as a literary genre in the ANE, which was brought to artistic perfection by the Israelite. More likely, the matrix for the origin of history writing in ancient Israel is to be found in the literary and narrative skills embodied in the scribes of the monumental inscriptions in the 9th to 7th cent. BCE (Emerton; Naʾaman), a perspective that also supports the idea of a preexilic Yahwistic history (Emerton; contra Van Seters).

D. Methodology

A slow and gradual change began to occur in historical studies generally with the emergence of the Annales School in the late 1920s, and especially in the Braudelian three-tier model's influence on biblical studies (Younger; Kofoed). Named after the journal where it was first expounded, the Annales School is best known for incorporating social scientific methods into the study of the past, rejecting the previous generation's fixation on politics, diplomacy, and warfare. This approach gradually exposed the weaknesses of the established schools of thought related to ancient Israel (both in Germany and in the United States), with their use of biblical texts as the starting point and their inability to use archaeological materials independently of those texts. In the last two decades of the 20th cent., the emphasis of the Annales School on empirical data, positivism, and multidisciplinary studies was combined with an extreme skepticism (or nihilism; some would say a hermeneutic of suspicion) regarding the historical reliability of the OT generally. The result was the so-called "Copenhagen School," with its methodological skepticism of textual evidence and positivistic need to verify data before accepting them in any historical reconstruction.

While the Annales School, and the later Copenhagen School, may be said to be developments within modernism, the turn of the 21st cent. has also given rise to a number of postmodern challenges to traditional historical studies (Barstad; Kofoed). Typically, postmodernist theory asserts that texts have no intrinsic meaning, and at times that "meaning" must be constructed by the reader. Basic principles of modernism, such as "objectivity," the distinction between "primary and secondary sources," and "historical truth" are routinely placed aside in such approaches (Barstad). The conflict with traditional exegetical method has been palpable. Regardless of the varying definitions of postmodernism or its legitimacy as a philosophical movement, the trend has brought into sharp relief the epistemic questions:

How do we know what we claim to know about the past and how legitimately can historians today make any claim to objectivity? Although the tenets of postmodernism may be exaggerated (if at times underappreciated), the hermeneutical crisis it has created is pointing toward development of a historical method that is multidisciplinary, incorporating more readily the insights of literary criticism, and that will offer an important corrective to traditional historical studies. Accordingly, an approach that distinguishes between source critical markers of the text and referential markers that help determine the genre of the text may result in more confidence in the reliability of the textual sources of the OT. Another helpful concept that may be useful for future research is the concept of "mnemohistory," which infuses the category of memory into the analysis. To this way of thinking, the biblical traditions of Israel's origins are understood as phenomena of collective cultural memory, creating an identity for the group. The truth of the past encoded in memory "lies in the identity that it shapes."

The current crisis in historical studies has resulted in a great divide between two groups. On the one hand, "revisionists" (minimalists, nihilists) typically reject the biblical account of Israel's history and maintain that the OT contains no reliable historical data and that, in fact, a history of ancient Israel cannot be written and should not be attempted. On the other hand, traditionalists (maximalists, literalists) insist that the referential dimension of the Israelite historical writings is vital and an integral part of interpretation, so that the historical reconstruction of Israel's past is never far removed from the actual events as described in the Bible itself. Despite the polarized rhetoric of these extremes, the challenges of the Copenhagen School and postmodern critiques of the historical enterprise have done a service for mainstream scholars (Bartlett). The methodologies that emerge from this crisis in the future will combine the important observations of genre with a reevaluation of the nature of history writing, the nature of the biblical traditions, and the nature and reliability of the biblical materials.

In the face of historicism's outmoded objectivity, it may be asked whether the historian of Israel's past is well served by an approach that embraces one's subjectivity. In this regard, the proposal of William J. Abraham to modify and redefine the three methodological principles established by Ernst Troeltsch at the turn of the century is still helpful. Troeltsch established "criticism" as a presupposed skepticism toward the sources, "analogy" as a principle in which human experience limits what qualifies as reality in the past, and "correlation" as a limit of historical causation to natural forces or human agency. Instead, Abraham argues that what is needed in the first principle—criticism—is a careful appraisal of data in the context of its source rather than a hermeneutic of suspicion that begins and ends in doubt. The second principle—analogy—must allow plausibility to be determined by reasonable arguments beyond the historian's own personal experience, and must also allow the past to serve as an interpretive key to the present rather than insisting it is only the present that serves as a key to the past. Finally, the third principle—correlation—should be defined formally rather than materially, meaning historical cause-and-effect and change over time can be effected by personal agency rather than merely natural or human agency, and thus the divine is brought back into the historical project. Although some would object to refining the historical-critical method along theistic lines, there is no inherent truth in the assertion that the atheistic or anti-theistic historian has fewer metaphysical assumptions than the theistic historian. Rather, the historian who discounts theological considerations as irrelevant has simply assumed the truth of certain negative theological statements, and is in fact no less theological than the theistic historian. Such a nontheological position at the very least puts the contemporary historian at something of a disadvantage with regard to empathetic evaluation of ancient sources where such beliefs clearly did hold sway. See ISRAEL, HISTORY OF; ISRAELITE RELIGION, HISTORY OF; JOSEPHUS, FLAVIUS; PENTATEUCH.

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<u>MESOPOTAMIA</u> mes´uh-puh-tay´mee-uh [אֲרַם נַהֲרַיִם mara̓ miyarahan; Μεσοποταμία aimatoposeM]. The Greek term means literally "in the midst of the river(s)" and has come secondarily to denote the vast land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the region from which international powers ruled the ancient world, including ASSYRIA AND BABYLONIA in the 1st millennium BCE. More narrowly, Mesopotamia is used in OT passages in translating the Hebrew name ARAM-NAHARAIM, the traditional homeland of Israel's ancestors, denoting a region more specifically in the northwest bend of the Euphrates River. The term Mesopotamia as a translation for this region is therefore inexact, and some translations choose instead to use "Aram-naharaim" as a more precise appellation for this region in north Mesopotamia. In the NT, Mesopotamia appears only in the book of Acts.

A. Terminology and Geographical Features
B. History
C. Biblical Usage

Bibliography

A. Terminology and Geographical Features

Mesopotamia formed a cultural and geopolitical unit distinct from Iran to the east and the Mediterranean coastline to the west throughout ANE history (ca. 4000–330 BCE), although it also extended beyond simply the Tigris-Euphrates Valley and its tributaries (see EUPHRATES RIVER; TIGRIS RIVER). The region went by a variety of names in the respective languages of antiquity until the Greeks referred to a satrapy formed by Alexander the Great as "Mesopotamia," a designation strictly true only if viewing the country from the west. Mesopotamia generally extends from the mouth of the Persian Gulf northwestward along the bend in the Euphrates and reaches eastward to the Tigris at the foot of the Zagros Mountains. All of modern Iraq and Kuwait, and parts of Iran, Syria, and Lebanon make up the area known as Mesopotamia.

The various subregions of greater Mesopotamia share cultural features: the economy was based almost entirely on agriculture and animal husbandry, while trade and transportation were critically important due to a lack of natural resources beyond soil, water, fish, etc. On the other hand, there are climatic and geographical differences between north and south Mesopotamia. In particular, the Zagros Mountains in the north and east give way gradually to the undulating hills of north Mesopotamia, where the Tigris River flows rapidly, making it less useful for transportation. Here too, in the north, the rain shadow provides adequate rainfall in a pleasant climate, making it possible to settle almost anywhere without dependence on irrigation for crops. Similarly in the northwest, in the great bend of the Euphrates adequate rainfall, in addition to a slower-flowing Euphrates and its many tributaries of the Khabur and Balikh rivers, made for extensive settlements early in human history.

By contrast, south Mesopotamia is characterized by an alluvial plain formed where the Tigris and Euphrates flow closest together just south of modern Baghdad, extending southeastward to the marches of the Persian Gulf. Rainfall is limited in the alluvial plain, so that most settlements were located in proximity to the slower moving Euphrates and its usefulness for irrigation. The erratic water supply and high water table meant relatively frequent flooding, and the scarcity of metals, stone, and wood made trade imperative in the south, usually in exchange for textiles and leatherwork. Cultural influence may be the south's greatest contribution to human history, since south Mesopotamia, or simply "Babylonia," may be credited with establishing the ideological and social infrastructure for much of ANE culture, and was often held in high regard for its cultural sophistication (Arnold). The differences between north and

south Mesopotamia were prevalent throughout ANE history, although the distinctions during the 1st millennium BCE between Assyria and Babylonia are of most interest for readers of the Bible.

So the term Mesopotamia may justifiably be used for this vast region of the ANE as first coined in Alexandrian times. However, evidence suggests that the pre-Hellenistic names for Mesopotamia, such as Aram-naharaim and variants in other ancient languages, connoted an association with one river only, the Euphrates, and not at all with two rivers as the name has been understood since the Alexandrian age (Finkelstein). Geographically, all city names associated with earlier names for the region are located in the extreme western portion, and none are east of the Khabur Valley. Lexicographically, the Aramaic and Akkadian terms that preceded the Greek form do not necessarily connote two rivers, since the Hebrew word miyarahan appears to be dual in form only but not meaning. In fact, in all likelihood, the original connotations of the earliest terms referred to the great bend of the Euphrates itself, the large U-shaped curvature in the northwest, and to the territory enclosed by the Euphrates on three sides (Finkelstein). No other river was designated by miyarahan or its cognates in other languages, and the region in view was the great riverine peninsula surrounded by the Euphrates in the northwest. Thus Aram-naharaim itself is more specifically this region in the northwestern bend of the Euphrates River.

B. History

When taken together with the Egyptian Nile Valley, Mesopotamia constitutes the matrix of ANE culture and the birthplace of human civilization. Because Mesopotamia is geographically open and easily accessible from nearly all its borders, the region was impacted by a steady infusion of different nationalities and people groups throughout ancient history. The distinctive cuneiform script used in the earliest written language of ancient Mesopotamia, Sumerian, was adapted by Semitic newcomers in the 3rd millennium BCE and subsequently exported to all points of the compass for varied use in many languages of western Asia.

For reasons that are obscure, southern Mesopotamia was the site of the world’s first urban civilization. Artificial irrigation in the alluvial plain made crop yields higher than was possible anywhere else in the ancient world and large settlements possible over less land. The meandering and slow-moving Euphrates provided a resource for irrigation, and the oldest and most important cities of the world were located in the south along its many canals and tributaries. An urban explosion occurred in the 4th millennium BCE in southern Mesopotamia. The process of urbanization continued into the 3rd millennium, accompanied by the invention of writing, widespread prosperity, and refined irrigation systems. During the first centuries of the 3rd millennium, Sumerian influence was felt most prominently in the southern regions of the alluvial plain, organized mostly among certain powerful city-states. By contrast, the northern alluvium was occupied predominantly by Semitic Akkadians, governed by something more like a territorial state than city-states. By the mid-3rd millennium, scribes at the city of Ebla in the northwest were using cuneiform script to record their extensive economic activities.

Sometime around 2300 BCE, north and south were unified briefly under the leadership of Sargon I of Akkad. Semitic populations had participated in Mesopotamian society for many centuries, but Sargon succeeded in replacing the Sumerian city-states of the south with Akkadian governors loyal to a central administration at Akkad, and his successful military campaigns gained control of important trade routes, leading briefly to a unified Mesopotamia more like an empire than a territorial state. The Old Akkadian language came into use for royal inscriptions, archives, and administrative texts, and Semitic religion became more prominent during this period. After the collapse of this first Semitic empire, a brief Sumerian renaissance occurred in the so-called Third Dynasty of Ur (ca. 2112–2004 BCE). Under the leadership of Ur-Nammu and his son and successor, Shulgi, administrative and economic reforms

transformed the city of Ur in the south into a centralized territorial state with its core in southern Mesopotamia and its periphery in provinces and cities in military buffer zones to the east and northwest. Sumerian literature enjoyed a brief revival during this period, although its contributions as a living and creative language began to wane with the turning of the new millennium.

Toward the end of the 3rd millennium BCE, the Sumero-Akkadian culture of Mesopotamia had advanced remarkably with regard to literature, economics, religion, and the arts. The arrival of the AMORITES into central and southern Mesopotamia as the 2nd millennium dawned was a turning point in ancient history. New Amorite city-states of various sizes began to supplant the Sumero-Akkadian culture of the previous millennium. Emerging from this widespread balance of power were the city-states of Asshur in the north along the Tigris under Shamshi-Adad I (1813–1781 BCE), the city of Mari on the west bank of the Euphrates under the Lim Dynasty (Yaggid-Lim, Zimri-Lim, etc.), and the first dynasty of Babylon in the south, which eventually rose to prominence under its sixth ruler, Hammurabi (1792–1759 BCE). The latter ushered in the Old Babylonian Period, creating an empire in and beyond Mesopotamia of such magnitude that it would leave an indelible mark on the rest of human history.

After the collapse of the Old Babylonian Empire and the fall of Babylon to the Hittites in 1595 BCE, a power vacuum in southern Mesopotamia was filled by the Kassites, a new ethnic group from Iran. Although this was not particularly an age of political strength or expansion for Mesopotamia, the stability provided by four centuries of Kassite Babylonian rule (down to 1155 BCE) brought renewed cultural significance to southern Mesopotamia, which came to be venerated as an ancient and prestigious cultural capital of the world. The Kassite period of Mesopotamian history brought a new political unification and centralized administration, resulting in an impressive period of prosperity and affluence for southern Mesopotamia. Across the ANE, the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 BCE) was one of internationalism, in which nation-states along the Mediterranean coastal rim (Egypt, the Hittites of Anatolia, the rich city-states of the Levant, and the Hurrians in northern Mesopotamia) all vied for political and military advantage. Among this "Great Powers Club," the Assyrians eventually began to emerge in northern Mesopotamia toward the end of the period. But the literary florescence and cultural prestige of southern Mesopotamia were preserved by the Kassites and are brilliantly illustrated by the use of the Babylonian language as the lingua franca for diplomatic correspondence among the nations (the "Amarna Age," named for the archive of cuneiform tablets from El-Amarna in Egypt preserving the correspondence between the great powers of the day).

The demise of Bronze Age culture in the ANE coincides with the collapse of the dominant empires of the Mediterranean world, the Hittites of Asia Minor and the Mycenean civilization on the mainland of Greece, as well as most of the city-state polities in the Levant. Within a fifty-year period around 1200 BCE, nearly every city in the eastern Mediterranean world collapsed suddenly. These political events, marking the transition from Bronze to Iron ages, were also accompanied by new cultural developments. The age of internationalism was officially over, and the Babylonian dialect ceased to be used as the lingua franca. A more convenient form of writing, the alphabet, spread beyond the Levant and changed the accessibility of written communication. New political systems began to emerge, and new ethnic entities emerged in the vacuum in the form of the Aramean city-states of Syria and the Israelites and Philistines in the southern Levant. The cause of the changes is most likely the Sea Peoples, the immigration of dozens of small groups from the Aegean, flowing into the Mediterranean basin and disrupting the previous balance of power, although the specific nature of these Sea Peoples is uncertain (see PHILISTINES; PHOENICIA).

The destruction of urban life across the eastern Mediterranean and the collapse of Bronze Age culture in general radically changed the political realities of the ANE. With the collapse of the Hittites and

Egyptians in the west, the center of power shifted to the east, especially to Assyria and Babylonia. Babylonia itself remained relatively stable and experienced little impact from the carnage in Anatolia and the Mediterranean rim. By contrast, the domino-like effect of the events in the eastern Mediterranean probably led to the arrival of the Arameans into central and southern Mesopotamia. In northern Mesopotamia, the presence of the Arameans contributed to the temporary decline of Assyria at the end of the 12th cent. BCE, and by the beginning of the 1st millennium, Arameans controlled not only southern Syria but the western territories of Babylonia. At the beginning of the 1st millennium, Mesopotamia was clearly divided into north and south, Assyria and Babylonia, the emerging new political entities of the Iron Age, thus marking the beginning of Assyro-Babylonian conflict as a central feature of Mesopotamian politics of the 1st millennium.

Political history in Mesopotamia in the 1st millennium BCE was largely a series of imperial powers, commencing with the Assyrian Empire, followed by the brief Babylonian Empire, the Persians, and subsequently Greek rule. Dominating throughout the first half of the 1st millennium was a single political identity in northern Mesopotamia, Assyria. The empire waxed and waned for centuries, but always played an intimidating role when it was on the rise. In Syria-Palestine, city-states and small territorial states fought each other until Assyria began to grow strong again, at which time they frequently forged alliances to hold off the Assyrian threat. The northern Israelites were often caught in these political machinations, and eventually fell victim to Assyrian might near the end of the 8th cent. BCE. For a brief period of time during the 7th and 6th cent., after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, Babylon rose again to premier international status and enjoyed a spectacular period of strength and prosperity in what may be called the Neo-Babylonian Empire (also sometimes known as the Chaldean Empire). Although extremely brief in duration, the grandeur of the empire, especially under Nebuchadnezzar II, and its legacy in the biblical and classical sources left an indelible mark on subsequent history, making this one of the most interesting periods of Mesopotamian history. The Persian capture of Babylon in 539 BCE ended the last native Semitic empire of ancient Mesopotamia.

C. Biblical Usage

While some have taken the Hebrew miyarahan maraʾ as a dual, and thus as “Aram of the Two Rivers,” assuming the two rivers are the Euphrates and the Khabur in north Mesopotamia, it more likely connotes “Aram of the River-land,” as we have seen, denoting the riverine peninsula in the upper middle Euphrates. This geographical name occurs five times in the OT. First, the Yahwist identified the ancestral home of Abraham as the city of Nahor in Aram-naharaim (Gen 24:10). The “city of Nahor” is almost certainly HARAN, which confirms the location of Aram-naharaim as a region on the middle Euphrates. The Priestly traditions appear to know the place as PADDAN-ARAM (e.g., Gen 25:20; 28:2).

Second, Aram-naharaim (or Mesopotamia) is also the homeland of Balaam, son of Beor, who is said to be from the city of Pethor (Deut 23:4 [Heb. 23:5]). In Num 22:5, Pethor is identified as “on the Euphrates, in the land of Amaw,” and Balaam further identifies himself as from Aram (Num 23:7), placing Pethor generally in Aram. More specifically, an inscription of Shalmaneser III locates Pitru/Pethor on the west bank of the Euphrates in northern Mesopotamia near the point where it joins the river Sagura (COS 2.113A:263). Although positive identification of the site is not yet possible, Tell Ahmar, also known in antiquity as Til Barsip, near Carchemish, is a candidate.

The third occurrence of miyarahan maraʾ is as the country ruled by King Cushan-rishathaim, one of the first enemies of Israel during the Judges period (Judg 3:8). This reference is of little value in determining the region denoted by the name. The fourth and fifth occurrences relate to David’s wars with the

Ammonites, who purchased matériel and hired infantry soldiers from Mesopotamia, or Aram-naharaim (1 Chr 19:6; Ps 60; compare 2 Sam 10:6).

Of these five occurrences of maraʾ miyarahan in the OT, four of them are translated by the LXX as "Mesopotamia" or "Syrian Mesopotamia," and once as "Syria of the Rivers" (Judg 3:8). The NRSV twice translates miyarahan maraʾ simply as "Mesopotamia" (Deut 23:4; 1 Chr 19:6), although elsewhere it uses "Aram-naharaim," a more precise designation for the region (compare JPS, NAB, NIB, NIV, NLT, etc.; NJB has "Upper Mesopotamia").

The context of maraʾ miyarahan in these occurrences confirms that the geographical name denotes the great bend of the Euphrates itself, its large U-shaped curvature in the northwest, and, specifically, the territory enclosed by the Euphrates on three sides, a so-called riverine peninsula. The use of "Syria of the Rivers" or "Syrian Mesopotamia" by the LXX translators only confirms this conclusion. English translations using "Mesopotamia" in the OT texts may be slightly misleading, since upper or northwest Mesopotamia is in view, so "Aram-naharaim" is preferable.

In the NT, "residents of Mesopotamia" are included in the list of devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem who, on the day of Pentecost, hear the rushing violent wind and the speech of the disciples and marvel that they hear in their own language the disciples proclaiming God's deeds of power (Acts 2:9). The last occurrence of Mesopotamia in the Bible is Stephen's identification of Abraham as living there prior to living in Haran (Acts 7:2). This assumes Ur of the Chaldeans was in south Mesopotamia, rather than another Ur in Upper Mesopotamia (compare Gen 11:28, 31; 15:7).

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FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT [καρπὸς τοῦ πνευματός karpos tou pneumatos]. This phrase is found only in Gal 5:22, though different terms and partial parallels exist in other places (compare Eph 5:9; Phil 1:11; 4:8; Col 1:6, 10; 3:12-15; 2 Pet 1:5-7). Nine qualifiers follow "fruit of the Spirit," concretely defining "fruit." These terms represent the ethical characteristics of life in Jesus through the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith/faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

These fruit are contrasted with "works of the flesh" in Eph 5:19-21. Similar virtues and vice lists occur in other NT works and in Hellenistic (esp. Stoic thought) and Roman literature, including Jewish Hellenistic literature. Lists such as these also played a role in the literature of the church fathers and Gnosticism. The nature of these fruit in the NT takes on a significant ethical tone quite different from similar lists in Hellenistic and Roman sources.

Fruit is a "generic" metaphor. Though singular in nature, it suggests a number of attributes that more concretely identify it. Moreover, the qualities for which it stands contain a center of coherence that derives from the Spirit's nature and work, noting results that come from one's association with the Spirit through Jesus. This association is contained in the syntactical relationship between "fruit" and "of the Spirit." "Of the Spirit" means that the Spirit produces these kinds of qualities in the believer.

The fruits of the Spirit, in Gal 5:22-23, are coupled with the works of the flesh in vv. 19-21. Both lists occur in a larger section (5:13-26) in which Paul exhorts his readers to ethical behavior, characterizing the crucified life (5:24) under the rule of God by the Spirit (5:21). Verses 13-15 provide summary statements of this section; the remaining verses detail the exhortation of v. 13b: "through love serve one another." "Walk/live by the Spirit" in vv. 16 and 25 frame Paul's exhortation for believers to live in freedom as slaves of Christ. The paradox of freedom/slavery in (v. 13) provides further emphasis. Thus, the fruits of the Spirit are set in bold contrast to the works of the flesh and show how believers are to live out this freedom.

Increasingly, scholars trace the fruit metaphor back to Isaiah's theology of restoration and new exodus, esp. chaps. 32 and 57. The wording of the LXX that provides a suitable linguistic and theological basis for future Pauline reflection and application. Though all the nouns in Gal 5:22-23 do not occur in these places, the metaphor "fruit" and some of the qualifiers do, such as righteousness and peace. Also, Isa 27 contributes to the setting of Paul's use of "fruit." This chapter sets forth judgment and salvation in military and agrarian metaphors. Israel will be like a fruitful vineyard (vv. 2-3; compare 32:12). In parallel structure, Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom. They will then fill the world with fruit (v. 6). In more literal and explicit terms, it is the Spirit who creates and works in his people to make them righteous (32:12-17). This promise is couched in such key terms as new creation, new exodus, and fruitfulness. Paul particularizes this time of the Spirit's activity in the new age as the new life in the Spirit. The coming of Jesus and the Spirit has thus fulfilled these and other Isaianic texts. See HOLY SPIRIT.

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GRATITUDE. The social ethos of gift-giving and reciprocity is perhaps best captured by the image of the "Three Graces," dancing in a circle, hand-in-hand (an image derived from Greek mythology, persisting into the Roman period). Seneca explained this image as an allegory for gift-giving: there is one "Grace" for giving well, another for receiving the gift well, a third for returning the gift well. Gifts passing through different hands nevertheless returned to the giver, and if the circle was broken at some point the beauty of the dance was destroyed (Ben. 1.3.2-5). Initiating the circle with a gift was a matter of choice on the part of the giver; showing gratitude and returning the favor for a gift one accepted was an absolute moral obligation (Aristotle, Eth. nic. 1163b12-15; Seneca, Ben. 1.4.3; Isocrates, Demon. 26; Sir 35:2).

In the LXX and NT, the word translated "grace," (charis χάρις), actually encompasses the entire cycle of gift-giving and response. In some contexts, the word emphasizes the favorable disposition of the giver (e.g., Gen 6:8; 18:3; Exod 33:13; Prov 3:34; 22:1; Luke 1:30; Rom 5:15, 17; Heb 4:16; Jas 4:6), in others the gift given (e.g., Esth 6:3; Sir 3:31; Wis 3:14; 8:21; 4 Macc 5:9; 11:12; Rom 12:3, 6; Heb 12:15; 1 Pet 1:10, 13; 3:7; 4:10; 5:15), and in still others the response of gratitude on the part of the recipients of favor (e.g., 2 Macc 3:33; 3 Macc 1:9; Luke 17:9; Rom 6:17; 7:25; 1 Cor 10:30; 2 Cor 8:16; 9:15; 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 1:3; Heb 12:28). The OT uses different words to capture the favorable disposition of the giver and the response of the recipient, but the latter is no less connected to the former. Thus offerings are still gifts "given back" (shuv שׁוּב) to God in acknowledgment of God's gifts (Num 18:9), and the psalmist muses at length how he will make a "return" to God for all God's benefits (Ps 116:12-19).

Failure to show gratitude was considered an act of injustice, even sacrilege against divine laws (Seneca, Ben. 1.4.4). It was also highly imprudent. Affronted benefactors could become dangerous enemies (Aristotle, Rhet. 2.2.8; 3 Macc 3:20-22a; 4 Macc 8:5-8; 9:10; compare Heb 10:26-31). Moreover, even though patrons and benefactors were to give in the interest of the recipient and not in their own interest (Seneca, Ben. 1.2.3; 4.29.3), they had limited resources and needed to give wisely—that is, to individuals or groups that understood how to be grateful (Sir 12:1; Seneca, Ben. 1.1.2; 3.11.1; Isocrates, Demon. 24). The person who understood how to show gratitude developed a kind of "good credit rating" for future benefactions (Sir 3:31; compare Seneca, Ben. 4.18.1; Anaximenes, Rhet. Alex. 1421b33–1422a2).

A city expressed its gratitude for public benefactions with the conferral of public honors, whether recognizing the generous act by crowning the benefactor at a public event, commemorating the gift with an inscription, or perhaps by erecting a statue of the giver. The extreme expression of such gratitude was worship. When the gift was of such magnitude as to match the gifts besought by the gods (deliverance from a foreign enemy, the enjoyment of peace and security, relief of a city or region from famine), the response of gratitude could take the form of cultic honors, as it did in the Roman imperial cult.

In personal relationships of friendship, where the parties were social equals, gratitude manifested itself chiefly in displaying appreciation for the gift, acknowledging the gift and one's association with the giver, and returning the kindness as and when appropriate. In personal relationships of patronage, where one party was socially and/or economically inferior to the other, gratitude would take the form of increasing the honor of the giver through personal testimony and, in Roman contexts, being visible among the giver's entourage (Aristotle, Eth. nic. 1163b1-5, 12-18; Seneca, Ben. 2.22.1; 2.24.4); showing loyalty to the patron in his or her conflicts with others, even when costly (Seneca, Ep. 81.27); and offering whatever service might be needed or requested by the patron (Seneca, Ben. 6.41.1-2).

The dynamics of reciprocity are frequently evident in human interactions, as when Ahasuerus seeks some way to honor Mordecai for the latter's timely service, or when Paul makes Philemon mindful of the former's many benefits when asking for a favor from the latter. These texts are primarily concerned, however, with guiding worshipers of the One God to be grateful recipients of God's gifts. In line with sociocultural practice, gratitude toward God is expressed through expressions of honor, thanksgiving, and testimony to the goodness of the Patron, whether through speech (Pss 103:1-6; 116:12-19; Cor 1:9-11; Eph 1:6, 12, 14; Col 1:12; 2:7; 3:15, 17; Heb 13:15; 1 Pet 2:10) or deeds (Matt 5:16; 2 Cor 9:11-12; 1 Pet 2:11-12; 4:10-11); loyalty to God, even at the cost of life itself (4 Macc 13:13; 16:18-19; 1 Cor 10:14-21; 1 Pet 1:6-9; Rev 14:6-13); and living with a view to making a fair return to God (1 Cor 6:19-20; 2 Cor 5:14-15), including "returning" gifts and services to God in the person of those whom God wishes to benefit (e.g., the poor in general or among the faith community, Matt 25:31-46; Eph 5:2; Heb 13:16; 1 John 3:16-18).

Worshipers are especially warned against acting ungratefully, bringing contempt upon their Patron or Mediator by their failure to show honor and loyalty (see esp. Heb 6:4-8; 10:26-31), or by a display of distrust toward the provisions God or Jesus has made for them (Gal 5:2-4; Heb 3:12, 19), which results in endangering their access to God's favor. Such warnings are in keeping with ancient social codes of reciprocity according to which the patron is never limited in regard to showing favor anew even to those who have acted ungratefully, but recipients are instructed never to presume upon such favor, attending fully instead to responding nobly to gifts that have been given, even when gratitude is costly.

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HEBREWS, LETTER TO THE [Πρὸς Ἑβραίους Pros Hebraious]. The traditional title of this text is misleading on two counts. This text is called a "letter." Elements of a standard letter closing in 13:18-25 (request, benediction, doxology, news and travel plans, conveying greetings, and final farewell) are similar to the closings of other NT letters (see Rom 15:30–16:23; 1 Thess 5:23-28; 2 Tim 4:19-22; 1 Pet 5:10-14). Nevertheless, Hebrews lacks a standard letter opening, starting instead with a sonorous, rhetorically crafted sentence appropriate to an oral speech. The author refers to his text as a "word of exhortation" (13:22), a term associated with the sermon delivered as part of a worship service in Acts 13:15, and assumes that his audience will be "hearing" his text (5:11). It is more helpful, therefore, to consider Hebrews as an example of early (and expert) Christian preaching. The author is unable to present his "word of exhortation" in person (13:19, 23), and so must send the transcript in written form to be read aloud by another party.

Unlike a letter, Hebrews does not name its recipients. "Hebrews" (from Hebraios [Ἑβραῖος]) represents an early guess concerning the intended addressees, perhaps based on the author's extensive use of the Jewish Scriptures and interest in the cultic rites of Israel. An argument centered on the obsolescence of the Old Covenant would seem to be more appropriately directed toward Jewish (Christian) readers than Gentile Christians. On the other hand, Galatians and 1 Peter, both of which are addressed to Gentile Christian audiences, assume that those readers will be able to follow arguments based on the Jewish Scriptures, and will be interested in how those texts can illumine how Gentile believers stand within God's covenant and relate to the particular institutions of the historic people of God, Israel. Moreover, Hebrews refers to a catechism of topics, many of which would be familiar to Jewish converts, but new to Gentile converts (6:1-3). When one adds the likelihood that the congregation addressed had been formed as part of the Pauline mission (the concern over Timothy in 13:23), which had as its explicit goal raising up Gentile believers, it seems prudent not to allow the secondary title to obscure the likelihood that the author addresses a mixed congregation of Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Hebrews begins with a rhetorical affirmation of the ultimacy of God's revelation in the Son who shares in God's divine nature and activity (1:1-4), who has been exalted even above the angels, as the author demonstrates from a chain of recitations from the Psalms and other familiar OT texts (1:5-14), followed by a call to the hearers therefore to take seriously the opportunity for deliverance that the Son has announced (2:1-4). The author thus establishes a pattern that will continue throughout the sermon: discussion of the superior status and achievement of the Son, followed by an exhortation to respond to the Son in a manner befitting that status and achievement.

Jesus is the one in whom the vision of exaltation in Ps 8 has been fulfilled (2:5-9), who leads the many sons and daughters of God on to a share in that glory (2:10-13), and who helps them persevere (2:14-18). Because he enjoys a higher place in God's house than Moses (3:1-6), it is essential for the believers to continue to respond faithfully and single-heartedly to the word that God spoke through him. The author depicts the wilderness generation—those who heard God's word through Moses but failed to follow through in a faithful response—as a negative example to avoid (3:7–4:13).

The middle portion of Hebrews comprises a lengthy exposition of the identity and achievement of Jesus viewed through the lens of priesthood and sacrifice (4:14–10:18). Jesus' appointment and qualification as "priest after the order of Melchizedek" is discussed in 5:1-10, after which the author breaks off in a digression intended to impress upon readers the importance of renewing their commitment to the direction in which God is calling them, lest they bring disgrace upon Jesus and retribution upon themselves by apostasy from the faith (5:11–6:8).

Assuring them that God's promises can indeed be trusted as the basis for their investments (6:9-20), the author returns to his main theme. He compares the obscure figure of Melchizedek with the Levitical priesthood, demonstrating the superiority of the former, and hence the superiority of the successor to Melchizedek, Jesus (7:1-28). This "better" priestly mediator officiates in a "better" sanctuary (the heavenly temple where God's presence dwells in its fullness), and inaugurates a "better covenant" (8:1-13). Jesus' death and his ascension into heaven are interpreted as the "better sacrifice," a combination of a cosmic Day of Atonement and covenant inauguration rite, that makes these benefits effective for those who approach God through Jesus (9:1–10:18). The author accomplishes something of an exegetical coup d'etat as he finds in Ps 40:6-8 the warrant for a unique human sacrifice that was appointed by God to achieve what the animal sacrifices so clearly legislated in the Torah could not (10:1-18).

A climactic exhortation to persevere in a course of action that displays gratitude to God and loyalty to one another in Christian community follows (10:32-39), the models of faith that are held up as praiseworthy in the Jewish Scriptures and Second Temple period traditions (11:1-40), and Jesus himself, the climactic model of faith in action (12:1-3). Their neighbors' attempts to shame them are transformed into an educative, formative process by means of which God shapes them as God's children (12:4-11). Believers are encouraged, therefore, to renew their commitment to staying their course, rather than giving up the joyful and festive access to God that is theirs in Christ for the sake of temporary relief (12:11-24), since the latter would prove ultimately disadvantageous (12:25-29). A series of closing exhortations urges mutual support, accepting the cost of preserving their unique privileges in Christ, and making praise and service offered in Christ's name the central focus of their lives in grateful response to God (13:1-17), followed by an epistolary prescript (13:18-25).

A. Structure
B. Detailed Analysis
   1. Author
   2. Audience and rhetorical situation
   3. Cosmology and eschatology
   4. Jesus, the great high priest
   5. Responding to the divine benefactor
   6. Contours of faith
   7. Obligations of community
C. Theological and Religious Significance
   1. Contributions to early christology
   2. Gift and response
   3. Perfecting the conscience
   4. Faith and freedom

Bibliography

A. Structure

1. 1:1–2:18, First Appeal: Heed the word of God spoken in the Son.
   1. 1:1-14, Thesis and confirmation: God's final and complete word has been spoken through the Son, who has greater honor even than the angels;
   2. 2:1-4, Exhortation to heed the announcement of deliverance made through the Son, drawing "lesser to greater" inference from 1:1-13;

    3. 2:5-18, Argument in support of the exhortation: Attachment to Jesus is the path to a share in his honor as well as the path of gratitude for past benefits and Jesus’ ongoing mediation.
2. 3:1–4:13, Second Appeal: Honor God’s word through trust and perseverance.
    1. 3:-6, Argument: Jesus, as Son over God’s house, has greater honor than Moses, the servant in God’s house;
    2. 3:7–4:13, Exhortation against imitating those who failed to trust God’s promises and died in the wilderness under the servant, Moses.
3. 4:14–10:18, Central Exposition: The “long and difficult word” about Jesus’ priestly work.
    1. 4:14-16, Exhortation: Take advantage of the access to God Jesus provides;
    2. 5:1-10, Exposition concerning Jesus’ appointment to high priesthood;
    3. 5:11–6:20, Digression
    4. 5:11-14, Interruption and appeal for attentive and responsive hearing;
    5. 6:1-3, Exhortation to move forward in Christian journey;
    6. 6:4-8, Argument from the contrary in support of exhortation;
    7. 6:9-12, Palliation: topics of confidence
    8. 6:13-20, Argument confirming cause for confidence;
    9. 7:1–10:28, Exposition Resumed: Christians’ superior access to God, thanks to Jesus;
    10. 7:1-28, Jesus’ superior qualifications for priesthood;
    11. 8:1-13, Jesus’ location in a better sanctuary, mediating a better covenant;
    12. 9:1–10:18, Jesus’ unique achievement: preparing all the people to enter God’s real presence.
4. 10:19–13:25, Exhortation: Persevere in gratitude for the benefactions granted through Jesus.
    1. 10:19-25, Exhortation based on this new access;
    2. 10:26-31, Rationale for accepting exhortation based on consideration of the contrary;
    3. 10:32-39, Exhortation to imitate former endurance and remain constant (show “faith”);
    4. 11:1–12:3, Encomium on faith, developing the portrait of this virtue in action;
    5. 12:4-17, Encouragement to endure opposition
    6. 12:18-29, Exhortation to confidence and gratitude;
    7. 13:1-21, Specific exhortations for living out this gratitude in everyday life;
    8. 13:22-25, Epistolary postscript.

The sermon’s alternation between exposition and exhortation has long been recognized as a key to its structure. The outline given above needs to be nuanced somewhat in light of the author’s artistry in weaving his work into a unified whole. For example, the close investigation of 4:14-16 and 10:19-22 by Guthrie (1994) reveals that the verses form an inclusio, setting off the “long and difficult word” that comprises the centerpiece of the sermon, and that they are both, in fact, transitional sections.

Scholars had formerly questioned the literary unity of the sermon, suggesting that Heb 13, with its relatively brief sentences of practical guidance, was not originally a part of the sermon, which concluded at 12:29. Filson’s study (1967) of the thematic and lexical connections between the material in Heb 13 and the remainder of the letter, however, has effectively put an end to this debate in favor of the unity of the text.

B. Detailed Analysis

1. Author

The writer of Hebrews does not give his name. Paul's reputation as a letter-writer and the reference to Timothy (13:22) led early scribes to attribute the letter to Paul. Several factors militate against this ascription, however. Paul came to faith in Christ through direct divine intervention (Gal 1:11-17; 1 Cor 15:3-10), whereas the author of Hebrews did so through other apostles (Heb 2:3-4). Paul never exhibits the attention to rhetorical ornamentation that this author does, and in fact speaks of his own reluctance to engage in such sermon craft (1 Cor 2:1-5). Although the sermon shares topics in common with Paul, they are developed in different ways; the focus on Jesus as high priest and on the Israelite cult, moreover, is quite distinctive.

Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian, noting the difference in rhetorical style and content, suggested alternative candidates from among the Pauline team. Barnabas and Apollos often emerge as favorites. Priscilla has become a recent favorite, but the author's use of a self-referential masculine participle argues against this proposal. Origen's conclusion remains the best: "Who wrote the letter? God knows" (quoted in Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 6.25.14).

The author comes from the large circle of teachers that constitute the Pauline team (13:23). He appears to have been known to the congregation, to whom he hopes to be restored (13:19). He is expert in the Jewish Scriptures and the art of rhetoric. Only 13:24, the greetings from "those from Italy," provides a clue to his location at the time of writing. It is unclear, however, whether this means that the author is in Italy sending greetings abroad (which seems more likely), or whether he is abroad with others who are away from Italy and sending their greetings back home. Some connection with Roman Christianity is confirmed by the early use of Hebrews by Clement of Rome in 95–96 ce, which also fixes the latest date of composition. The author's question in 10:2 ("would they [the sacrifices] not have ceased being offered?") appears to presuppose that the Levitical sacrifices continue to provide the "annual reminder of sins" (10:3), suggesting a date prior to 70 ce, when the Temple was destroyed by the Roman armies.

2. Audience and rhetorical situation

The addressees came to faith in response to the preaching of early Christian missionaries and the concurrent experience of the Holy Spirit, whose power accompanied the proclamation (2:1-4; compare Gal 3:1-5; 1 Cor 2:1-5). The author speaks of their process of resocialization into the worldview and beliefs of the Christian group (6:1-3), and the author will rely on the addressees' agreement with these foundational beliefs (e.g., the value of faithfulness toward God and the realities of resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment) in the argument.

The addressees had faced attempts to shame them back into conformity with their old, pre-Christian way of life. Non-Christian Jews would be interested in pressuring Jewish Christians whose commitment to the particulars of the Torah was seen to wane to return to a more observant lifestyle. Non-Christian Gentiles would find their Gentile Christian neighbors' withdrawal from worship of the traditional gods and the social contexts where such worship occurred to betoken serious problems for social unity. Neither group would approve of their neighbors' celebration of a crucified revolutionary as the coming king of a new political order.

These opponents used the shaming techniques of their society—verbal abuse, physical assaults, manipulation of the justice system to deprive believers of material wealth—to make a spectacle of the

Christians and to make them feel shame at their association with the Christian group (10:32-34). Rather than allow these deviancy-control techniques to pull them away from their new faith, they rallied together instead to support those who had been targeted and boldly continued to associate openly with the followers of Jesus.

Over the long term, loss of status and honor has begun to erode the commitment of at least some members of the congregation(s). Some have ceased to associate openly with the meeting of the Christian assembly (10:25). Others are in danger of "drifting away" (2:1), "neglecting the message" (2:3), "turning away from the living God" (3:12), falling short of entering God's promised rest and God's gift (4:11; 12:15), "falling away" to the public humiliation of their Redeemer (6:4-6; 10:26-31). There is no indication in the sermon that the addressees face a new wave of persecution, nor a new challenge to "orthodox" belief; rather, they have been made to live too long between the loss of their status, their place, in their host society and their reception of their new status and place in God's eternal realm. As a result, they have begun to question whether God's promises are worth their utter alienation from the way of life and social networks of support they once enjoyed.

In the sections that follow, we will consider prominent elements of the author's rhetorical strategy for addressing these pastoral challenges.

3. Cosmology and eschatology

The author assumes a cosmology in which space is divided into two orders: the visible, material earth and heavens (skies, stars, etc.) and the invisible realm beyond creation ("heaven itself," 9:24). The former is subject to change and to removal (1:10-12), as will in fact happen in the anticipated future in a decisive "shaking" of things "made" (12:26-28). The latter existed prior to creation and will endure into eternity. As is the case in other Jewish texts (e.g., 1 En. 90:28-29; T. Levi 2–5), the cosmos is represented by the desert tabernacle or Temple (6:19-20; 8:1-2; 9:1-11), with the visible creation constituting the outer chamber and courts that must be removed in order for the way into the heavenly Holy of Holies to be revealed (9:8, 24). The author also describes this realm as the "rest" into which God entered after creation (3:7–4:11), the heavenly homeland (11:16), the lasting city (13:14). From the time-bound perspective of human beings, the realm inhabited by God and his angels is "coming" (2:5), but it in fact exists now as a present reality about which the believers can be confident, Jesus having passed through the visible heavens (4:14) to enter the abiding realm as their "forerunner" (6:20).

The author uses elements of Platonic language (e.g., the use of "type" in 8:5 and "shadow" in 10:1) and concepts (visible, material realities have their "true" and "lasting" counterparts in an immaterial realm). However, the author has thoroughly embedded these terms and concepts in a Jewish-Christian apocalyptic framework quite alien to Plato (as is the notion of the penetrability of the two realms, with first Jesus, then the believers, entering the abiding realm).

Based on this cosmology and eschatology, the author can claim that those goods pertaining to God's realm are qualitatively "better" because they are "lasting" (10:34; 11:16; 12:28; 13:14). On this basis, he urges perseverance in faithful response to God. Any losses sustained in that journey are the losses of temporary, fading goods—acceptable losses in view of the abiding goods believers will enjoy in God's realm (10:32-35; 11:24-26; 13:13-14). Protecting temporary goods at the cost of relinquishing one's hold on eternal goods alienates the divine benefactor by preferring the world's gifts to God's. Such behavior is as foolish as Esau's exchange of his birthright for a single meal (12:16-17).

4. Jesus, the great high priest

The most distinctive contribution of Hebrews to the early church's reflection on Jesus is its author's high priestly christology and, by extension, a much fuller interpretation of Jesus' death and exaltation in terms of priesthood and sacrifice. This theme is announced briefly in 1:3 ("having made purification for sins") and again in 2:17, and is given full attention in 4:14–10:18. Fundamental to the success of his argument is a shared commitment on the part of author and addressees that the oracles of God in the Jewish Scriptures find their ultimate meaning when read in relation to Jesus. Certain texts from the prophets and psalms are spoken about Jesus (2 Sam 7:14 in Heb 1:5), spoken to Jesus (Ps 2:7; 110:1, 4 in Heb 1:5, 13; 5:5-6), sometimes even spoken by Jesus (Ps 22:2; Isa 8:17-18; Ps 40:6-8 in Heb 2:12-13; 10:5-8). At the same time, the author works with a typological model, according to which the institutions and rites of the first covenant, e.g., provide the template for understanding the significance of the mediator of the second covenant and his achievement (see, e.g., the use of the rites of the Day of Atonement from Lev 16 and the covenant inauguration ceremony of Exod 24:1-8 to illumine Jesus' accomplishment in Heb 9:1-28). In this way, texts from the Jewish Scriptures (sometimes, as with Ps 40:6-8, clearly relying on the Greek translation) even become witnesses to the invisible stretches of the Son's career (notably, the Son's pre-incarnate activity and his post-resurrection activity). The preamble (1:1-4) reflects this basic hermeneutical presupposition: the Son is the lens through which the piecemeal, diverse moments of illumination from God through the prophets refract into a single, coherent beam of revelation.

Psalms 2:7 and 110:1 play a key role in other NT writings, the first being used to name Jesus as God's "Son" and heir to the Davidic promises, the second establishing Jesus' exaltation to God's right hand and the expectation of the manifestation of his suppression of every opponent (see Acts 2:34-35; 13:33; Matt 22:44; 1 Cor 15:25). This author, however, reads beyond the opening verse of Ps 110:1 to find the same "you" who was named a "son" in Ps 2:7 to be named a "priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps 110:4; Heb 5:5-6). This leads to a close examination of the obscure figure of Melchizedek (Gen 14:17-20; Heb 7:1-10), and to a reconfiguration of the priestly story of the Jewish Scriptures at the end of which Melchizedek and Levi seem to stand as two principal, equal, alternative paradigms of priesthood—despite the fact that the former is mentioned only twice in the Jewish Scriptures!

Melchizedek emerges here as a Messianic type ("righteousness" and "peace" were typical expectations of the Messiah). It is vitally important that Melchizedek does not hold his priesthood on the basis of fitting into a particular family line, genealogy being the ultimate criterion for priestly service under the Torah. Melchizedek is presented, rather, as one who possesses an unending life, and this becomes the criterion that Jesus (and Jesus alone) can also fulfill. Based on an idiosyncratic reading of Gen 14:17-20, the author also concludes that Melchizedek is a priest of a higher order than that of Levi, which becomes the launching pad for the author's catalogue of the factors that set Jesus above the other priestly mediators sanctioned in God's redemptive history: a priest who never dies, who never sins, whose appointment is confirmed by divine oath, who brokers a better covenant, and who ministers from the better, heavenly sanctuary (7:11–8:13).

The Day of Atonement rites of Lev 16 provide a template for understanding Jesus' death and exaltation. Jesus' procession to Calvary "outside the gate" reenacts the scapegoat who bore the people's sins and was driven "outside the camp" (Lev 16:20-22, 27; Heb 13:11-13). Jesus' ascension reenacts the high priest's entrance into the Holy of Holies to apply the sacrificial blood to the ark (Lev 16:15-19; Heb 9:11-14, 23-28). And just as the high priest emerged from the Holy of Holies to bless the people, so

Jesus is anticipated to emerge again from “heaven itself,” bringing deliverance to those who await him at his coming (9:28).

Jesus’ death has opened up an entirely new relationship between God and human beings. Formerly, under the first covenant, access to God was highly limited and the people kept at a distance from the holy God. The author regards the persistence of this limited access to God to be the sign of the failure of the Levitical priesthood (7:11, 18-19a; 9:9; 10:1-2). Jesus’ death, however, effects the decisive removal of sin and, the hoped-for new covenant promised by Jeremiah (Jer 31:31-34; see especially Heb 8:12; 10:17). By removing sin from the conscience of the human being (“perfecting” the worshiper, 9:14; 10:10, 14), human beings will come into God’s real presence, the heavenly Holy of Holies. All those who, under the Levitical priesthood had no hope even of entering the earthly holy places can now enter “heaven itself.”

Jesus’ ritual journey is one that the believers are called to embark upon (10:19-25; 13:11-14). The “many sons and daughters” must follow the path pioneered by the Son through suffering to glory (2:10; 6:19-20). The Son’s incarnation is interpreted as God’s conforming the Son to the experience of human beings, to know their trials and challenges intimately, so as to better offer them assistance from his position as exalted high priest (2:16-18; 4:14-16), Jesus walked the path of suffering because God knew that the “many sons and daughters” would walk such a path as they moved toward their heavenly calling. Throughout his exposition, the author is keenly aware that he is overturning a priesthood, covenant, and sacrificial system established by God’s authority. The fact that God announces the appointment of a new “priest after the order of Melchizedek” through “David” (the supposed author of Ps 110) centuries after the giving of the Torah, which established its own priesthood after the order of Levi, shows that God is behind this change of arrangements (7:11, 17-19). Similarly, the oracle of Jer 31 concerning a new covenant is a later divine word that sets aside the previous one (Heb 8:6-13; vv. 7, 13 draw these implications explicitly). Similarly, the oracle of Ps 40:6-8 is a later word that brings an end to the system of sacrifices previously established by another word from God in favor of a new kind of sacrifice (Heb 10:5-8).

5. Responding to the divine benefactor

The heart of the author’s rhetorical strategy is to keep the addressees focused on the matchless gifts that have come to them—and will yet come to them—through Jesus’ mediation, and thus the value of remaining connected with Jesus as their mediator of God’s favor. The social institutions of patronage and benefaction undergird the author’s portrayal of Jesus’ relationship to the addressees, as well as their proper response of gratitude to this Jesus.

In presenting Jesus as a mediator (8:6; 9:15; 12:24), the author of Hebrews presents him in the social role of “broker,” one whose gift is access to another. The details that the author offers about Jesus’ proximity to God—in terms of space (at God’s right hand), household (a “son” in God’s house), and relationship (never sinning against God, alienating God)—all magnify Jesus’ value as an effective mediator of God’s favor. Angels, Moses, and the Levitical priests were all recognized mediators of God in the Jewish tradition of the author, but Jesus surpasses them all in honor and effectiveness.

On the one hand, connection with this Jesus assures one of continued enjoyment of access to God and finding all the resources one needs to persevere (4:14-16) on the road to enjoying the fullness of what God has for the believers in the abiding realm (2:10; 3:6, 14; etc.). On the other hand, preferring to restore friendship with the unbelieving society at the cost of disloyalty and insult to this Jesus threatens

not only the loss of these great benefits but also encountering God as Judge and Avenger of the slighted honor of God’s Son (6:4-8; 10:26-31).

The expectation of reciprocity—of returning gratitude (loyalty, thanks, and service or some other appropriate return) for the gifts of great persons—undergirds the warning passages of Hebrews. God’s gifts (Heb 6:4-5) are given in the expectation that they will take root in the lives of the recipients and bear pleasant fruit (continued confession of Jesus, along with acts of love and service on behalf of fellow believers; 6:7, 9-10; 13:15-16). Turning away from Jesus amounts to a public testimony concerning the little worth of Jesus and the gifts, secured at the cost of his own life (6:6), a willful insult that could only be expected to result in decisive alienation from God.

The Wilderness Generation illustrates how not to respond to God’s promises “shrinking back” (10:39) as they did in the face of the obstacles (the story is told in Num 14, and recalled here in the recitation of Ps 95:7-11 [LXX]). Standing on the threshold of Canaan, they considered the opposition too great in alienating themselves from the Divine Patron who merited absolute trust and thus fell short of entering the promised rest (3:7-19).

The author employs these warnings to arouse fear (4:1; 10:27, 31) of the course of action that would lead them to compromise their allegiance to Jesus and to one another for the sake of temporary relief from reproach and deprivation. He positions them, like the wilderness generation, at the threshold of entering God’s heavenly holy place, their heavenly homeland, and calls them to make God’s promises the foundation and focal point of life since they are, indeed, reliable (6:13-20; 10:36-39).

6. Contours of faith

The sermon is perhaps most celebrated for its portrait of “faith” in action through its rehearsal of how the “heroes of faith” have responded to God’s word and promise (Heb 11). This encomium (a laudatory, celebratory speech) on the virtue of faith is thoroughly shaped by the specific challenges facing the addressees. A recurring theme of the examples is that people of faith act in this world with a view to the future intervention of God and reception of God’s promises, and with a view to the invisible realities beyond this world (11:1). Thus Noah acts with a view to a disaster yet to come (11:7), Abraham with a view to receiving a homeland in the future (11:8-22), Joseph gives instructions in view of future acts of God (11:22), Moses with regard to God’s future acts of liberation on behalf of the Israelites and the reward yet to come (11:23-27). People of faith look to the invisible cause of the visible world (11:3); Moses acted as one who “regarded” the invisible God (11:27). Both of these elements are vitally important in the overall exhortation to the congregation(s), who must conduct themselves in such a way as to negotiate future crises successfully (1:13; 2:3; 10:30-31, 37-39) and to maintain their grasp of goods as yet not seen (3:6, 14; 6:12; 10:34-35; 11:16; 12:28; 13:14).

The examples drive home the lesson that the person of faith accepts temporal loss for the sake of eternal (“abiding,” “lasting”) gain, and for the sake of the freedom to pursue this greater hope and calling. The author crafts his examples in such a way as to resonate with the addressees’ plight. Abraham leaves behind his place at home, accepting the lower status of sojourner and alien in Canaan, mirroring the loss of status within their native cities suffered by the addressees (11:9, 13). Rejection of being “at home” in their native land becomes a source of witness to the “better, heavenly homeland” that Christians seek (11:14-16). Moses also chose not to maintain his status in Pharaoh’s household, voluntarily identifying with God’s marginalized people and the reproach that befalls them and God’s “anointed” in this world (11:24-26; compare 10:32-34; 13:3, 13). Prophets and martyrs (the martyrs whose story is recounted in 2 Macc 6–7 and 4 Macc 5–17) accepted being driven into the margins of society and even the

degradation of torture and death out of loyalty to God and in hope of the "better resurrection" that God would bestow upon faithful clients (11:35-38; again compare 10:32-34; 13:3). Jesus crowns the list of examples (12:1-3) by "enduring a cross, despising shame." Responding obediently to God and attaining the reward God set before him involved embracing humiliation (including the "verbal abuse" with which so many of the addressees could relate, 12:3) and suffering, showing that faith looks only to God's approval, and, in so doing, attains eternal honor. The addressees' behavior in the past also fell into this commendable pattern (10:32-34), and the writer urges them to continue that commitment to God and to one another, holding onto God's promises, not temporal goods.

7. Obligations of community

In the midst of a society that discourages continued association with the Christian community and its way of life, the author seeks to mobilize Christians to provide social support for their mutual association. The community has an important role in empowering the perseverance of individuals. The hearers must watch for signs that particular members of the community are succumbing to the pressures of the society (3:12-13; 12:15), and are thus in danger of relinquishing their hold on God and God's gifts. Their failure to become "teachers" by this point (5:11-14) is a failure to take an active role in helping their sisters and brothers to maintain their commitment to the lifestyle of the Christian group.

This mutual support is found when the community gathers together, so that withdrawal of some diminishes the whole (10:24-25). Members of the community show visible and material support for one another, particularly toward those who are most marginalized and therefore in danger of succumbing to society's pressures to return to their former lifestyle (10:32-34; 13:1-3). The sacrifices of the new congregation of the sanctified consist of praise and bold testimony (13:15), as well as acts of kindness and sharing possessions (13:16), especially with fellow Christians. Each community member should allow the plight of others to touch him or her on the basis of their shared humanity, being "embodied" and vulnerable to the same ills and therefore bound to help one another rather than turn a blind eye (or, worse, contribute to another's suffering, 13:3). Taking on the responsibility of family toward one another (13:1), Christians are able to sustain the commitment of individual believers when obedience to the call of God leads them in directions contrary to the ways embraced by their other social networks.

C. Theological and Religious Significance

1. Contributions to early christology

The author has made a lasting contribution to the church's reflection on the person of Jesus and on components of the Christian creed, namely Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. The author's high priestly christology and sacrificial interpretation of Jesus' death and exaltation has been explored above, as has the use of texts from the prophetic literature and Psalms to develop a picture of the Son's significance.

Another important body of tradition utilized by the author to express the role and status of the Son is wisdom tradition, particularly the figure of "Wisdom" as she is personified in Prov 8 and Wis 7–9. The author ascribed attributes of Wisdom now to the pre-Incarnate Son. Recalling Wisdom, the Son is now seen as an active agent in Creation (Heb 1:2; see Prov 8:22-31; Wis 7:22; 9:9) and in the ongoing governance of the cosmos ("he sustains all things," Heb 1:3; see Wis 7:27; 8:1). Like Wisdom, who was praised as "the reflection of eternal light" and "the image of God's goodness" (Wis 7:26), the Son manifests the "radiance of God's glory" and is "the exact representation of God's very being" (1:3a).

Hebrews 1:1-4 thus adds its voice to the Christ Hymn (Phil 2:6-11), Col 1:15-20, and the prologue to John in pushing Christian reflection toward a christology of Jesus as eternal Son of God.

2. Gift and response

Hebrews highlights the assumption that early Christian teachers shared with their culture, that valuable gifts call forth costly response, indeed that a gift does not have its full effect in its reception but in the response to the gift. The cycle of giving, receiving, and responding constitutes a single, fluid, transformative relationship creating and sustaining movement. Our investment in our response reveals our estimation of the gift (and the Giver), hence the dangerous situation contemplated in 10:26-31, where the response shows the gift and Giver to be held in lesser esteem than enjoying the friendship of the non-Christian society.

Hebrews' articulation of this dynamic assists believers in connecting grace and discipleship, the experience of God's favor and the investment of one's whole self in responding, or in alignment of belief and action. The social dynamic of reciprocity assists disciples in understanding how receiving God's gifts motivates faithfulness, witness, and service. God's gift is not to be treated as something that we receive for our own enjoyment alongside other commodities, but that does not thereby lay a transforming claim on our ambitions and actions.

3. Perfecting the conscience

Hebrews' concept of "perfection" has been the center of much scholarly discussion. Two key uses focus on Jesus' perfection (the process by which he became a sympathetic high priest in God's heavenly holy places) and the perfection of the conscience of the believers (fitting them to enter God's presence along with Jesus). The author touches the heart of Christian religious experience. Jesus has gone further than any other priestly figure into God's space (heaven itself) and further into our space (our conscience, our inner being) to enable us to become completely transparent to God and encounter God more fully. Such spatial and cultic metaphors show that the death and resurrection of Jesus opens up new dimensions of relating to God. Where worship and spiritual direction lead disciples toward religious encounter with God and becoming open before God, the essential vision of the author of Hebrews is realized. Ushering people into the real presence of God, proleptically in access to the "throne of favor" (4:16) and finally at their entrance into the realm beyond time and space is the goal and heart of effective religion (7:19).

This unprecedented possibility of intimate access to God makes "willful sin" so hazardous in the mind of the author (10:26-31). Willful sin becomes a recontamination of the cleansed conscience, bringing back the fear, the distance, the dread of encountering God, displacing the joyful approach to God in the expectation of favor. Hebrews 10:29 names the sin within the willful sin, beneath the particular manifestations of the sin that so often become the focus of attention that disciples miss the root sin—an opportunity to honor God has been lost for the sake of the temporary ease or gratification of the self, or some such lesser good. Once again, the author challenges disciples to connect religious experience with ethical response.

4. Faith and freedom

In a social situation where pressures were being brought to bear to suppress continued participation in the religious and social experiences of Christian congregation(s), exhortations to faithful perseverance are calculated not merely to constrain the hearers but to liberate them. That is, the language of "faith" is the language of freedom from the constraints of one's unbelieving neighbors.

This freedom takes two distinct yet mutually supporting forms. First, faith enables freedom from the tyranny that concern for temporal pleasures and deprivations exercise over the human spirit. Faith weighs anchor in the realm beyond “this creation.” Not only does this perspective allow the believer freedom to consider whether or not life is indeed more than food or clothing but also to move about with freedom from the larger society’s systems of rewards and sanctions (its “deviancy-control” techniques).

The second form of freedom is expressed by the author as parrēsia (παρρησία), “boldness,” “frank speech.” Faith allows the believer not to be cowed into silence (in speech or in living witness) about the value of Jesus, his gifts, and his promises. It is the freedom of Christian witness and solidarity (10:33-35) where the domination systems at work around the believers would silence that witness. Jesus’ obedient acceptance of the cross was an act of liberation from the fear of death and all the other sanctions that domination systems use to enforce conformity and cooperation (2:14-15). The author’s picture of a response of faith that is willing to live in the margins, to step into places of temporal deprivation and disadvantage for the sake of obediently and single-heartedly pursuing God’s promises, and for the sake of solidarity with the people of God, at once speaks of the great freedom that is to be found in Jesus—and of the potential bondage that besets the comfortable Christian that is too well adjusted to his or her social context. See CHRISTOLOGY; FAITH, FAITHFULNESS; WISDOM IN THE NT.

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DAVID A. DESILVA

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LAND [אֲדָמָה ʾadhamah, אֶרֶץ ʾerets; ἀγρός agros, γῆ ge, χώρα chōra]. The land is one of the central themes of the OT. In the OT and Judaism, the concept of the "promised land" and descendants to populate it is unparalleled in its importance for any understanding of the covenant. In the early Jewish and NT era, discussion about the land and its centrality to Jewish life was vigorous. Can religious life be lived outside the land of promise? Can the law be obeyed without reference to it? The NT does not ignore these debates, but rather presents an alternate solution for the theological geography of God's people.

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A. The Old Testament

1. Overview

In Genesis, land is a gift from God from the beginning of CREATION. The appearance of "dry land" (Gen 1:9) is set in contrast to the chaotic sea (Ps 104:5-9). In creation, land can welcome life and provide safety and refuge (Jonah 1:9); it represents a place where all people can anchor their culture and nation.

A variety of Hebrew terms represent the ideas of land in its more nuanced uses: there are open fields, orchards, pasture, desert, and dry land. One frequently used noun is ʾadhamah, which refers to the agricultural qualities of land, as soil or fields (Gen 2:7; 3:19; Prov 12:11). The most common term is ʾerets, and while a precise distinction may be uncertain, ʾerets often represents land as geographical or political territory. This term is used for one's land of birth or native land (Gen 11:28; Jer 22:10). It is used for tribal territories as well as the nations who live there (e.g., "the land of Canaan").

2. The promise and its description

The original call of Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 promises that he will be the father of a great nation, but no promise of land is heard until Gen 13:14-17, when Abraham scans the country he enters for the first time. The formal promise is given full shape in Gen 15:18-21. It is repeated in Gen 17:7-9 and then repeated again for his descendants Isaac (Gen 26:2-4) and Jacob (Gen 28:13-15). In all four passages two themes are clear: Abraham will receive land as an everlasting possession; and this promise is directly tied to the covenant. In the repetitions for Isaac and Jacob, two additional elements are incorporated from Gen 12:1-3: Abraham's posterity will become a great nation in this place; and all of

the people of the earth will be blessed through Abraham's descendants. This PROMISE of land and progeny is held up in the OT as a remarkable gift of grace to Abraham and his descendants.

The land of promise is always portrayed as a good land. God, Moses, and others refer to it as a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Exod 3:8, 17; 13:5; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27). When Moses tries to describe it to the Israelite tribes, he contrasts it with the land of Egypt, where irrigation was necessary. This land will be a "land of hills and valleys which drinks water by the rain from heaven," a land under the direct care of God (Deut 11:11-12).

While it will be a good land, it will not be an easy land, but one that requires faith. Agriculture must rely on God, who supplies the land with water. Culturally, the land will be filled with Canaanites (and others) who will tempt Israel to compromise its unique commitment to Yahweh. Politically, armies moving from Egypt to Mesopotamia will run through this land as if it were a highway, and Israel will be forced to decide if its security will be found in local treaties and alliances or in God who promises to sustain its welfare.

The OT presents two "maps" of where this land is located. Numbers 34:1-12 defines this land as "the land of Canaan" extending from the JORDAN RIVER to the Mediterranean Sea (east/west) and from the "Wadi of Egypt" to Hamath. This view is confirmed when Josh 3:10-17 describes Israel's crossing of the Jordan. Lands east of the Jordan are excluded.

Deuteronomy 11:24 extends these boundaries and includes both sides of the Jordan (excluding Moab and Ammon) as well as northern reaches all the way to the EUPHRATES RIVER (compare Gen 15:18-21). Hence by this account, when Israel crosses the Arnon River (in TRANSJORDAN), its struggle for "the land" begins. This second map is viewed by many scholars as a later vision for political geography that may have come from the politically expansive era of the united monarchy. The center of this promise is certainly the region west of the Jordan, focusing on the regions near Jerusalem and when extended north and south, this area makes a claim on land "from Dan to Beersheba" (Judg 20:1).

3. The covenant and the land

In each reiteration of the promise, the land is linked to the covenant. For example, in Gen 17:8-9, the land promise is followed with a reminder about covenant fidelity: "God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.'" In other words, the land is not a possession that may be enjoyed without reference to God. Possessing this land is contingent on Israel's ongoing faithfulness to God and obedience to God's law.

Both Leviticus and Deuteronomy warn Israel in stark terms about the conditional nature of this promise. Leviticus 18:24-30 warns about defilement with the culture of the Canaanites (see CANAAN, CANAANITES). If Israel embraces such unrighteousness, "the land will vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you" (v. 28). Leviticus 20:22-26 connects this theme to ritual holiness in the same way. The impression is that the land itself can suffer abuse and be defiled. As sinners were ejected from the camp of Israel, so too, Israel can be ejected from the land of God.

Before Israel enters the land under Joshua's leadership, Deuteronomy records Moses' final words of encouragement and warning to the people "When you have had children and children's children, and become complacent in the land, if you act corruptly by making an idol in the form of anything, thus doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, and provoking him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are crossing the

Jordan to occupy; you will not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. The Lord will scatter you among the peoples; only a few of you will be left among the nations where the Lord will lead you" (Deut 4:25-27). The severity of these words is stunning. This land is a gift that comes with expectations for covenant holiness and justice.

The seriousness of living in the land of promise can be seen following Joshua's campaigns. He immediately takes the Israelite tribes north to the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim and requires that they recommit themselves to the covenant (Josh 8:30-35). Following their breathtaking successes at Jericho and Ai, Israel's first duty is to renew loyalty to the covenant in which their privileges of using the land are anchored. Joshua's rededication reinforces the idea that covenant and land are inseparable (see JOSHUA, BOOK OF).

The contingency of life in the land can be seen clearly in Judges, where each generation must work out the depth of their commitment to the covenant. When their commitment fails, they experience the near loss of tribal territory through war. At the end of the book, two troubling stories bring stark case studies of this loss. The tribe of Dan indulges in religious corruption (Judg 17–18) by instituting their own priesthood. Benjamin indulges in a horrifying moral corruption (19–21) when a Levite's concubine is sexually abused and killed. In both cases, Dan and Benjamin jeopardize their privileges of living in the land. In each case, the theological message is the same: land and righteousness are inextricably linked.

The OT contains an array of stories showing how land use and covenant righteousness cannot be separated. When David wishes to acquire land for God's temple in Jerusalem, he treats with righteousness Ornan the Jebusite (who owns the threshing floor David wants). This promised land, this land in Jerusalem, was owned by an "alien" and yet "belonged" to Israel through promise. David does not take this land by force but purchases it at a steep price (600 shekels of gold, 1 Chr 21:25). Ahab represents the opposite position. He covets land in Jezreel owned by a vineyard owner named NABOTH. Ahab and Jezebel conspire to kill Naboth in order to steal land, but their unrighteousness is uncovered and condemned by Elijah (1 Kgs 21:19). Covenant land cannot be taken by royal strategies of consumption.

4. God and the land

God's remarkable interest in this land is explained by one undergirding theme. In a profound sense, Israel never "owns" the promised land. God owns this land. Leviticus uses this idea to explain why the land cannot be sold permanently to others (Lev 25:23). Israel here is viewed as a tenant in this land, an alien, a renter. Israel must hold this land loosely, because God will determine the tenure of its occupants.

The OT reinforces this notion of God's ownership of the land in a variety of ways. The land was not to be considered "private property" but was distributed by God by casting lots (Num 26:55). The trustees of this use were the tribes, never individuals (Num 36:3; Josh 17:5). This "loose ownership" can be seen in the provisions for the Jubilee Year in Lev 25. No land could be bought or sold permanently, because every fiftieth year the land had to return to the users God had declared in the beginning (see JUBILEE, YEAR OF). God continues to exercise divine oversight of how this land is used.

Moreover, the harvests of Israel were understood in light of God's ownership. First crops and first animals belonged to God and so were offered in sacrifice (Lev 27:30-33; Deut 14:22; 26:9-15). The command to "keep the Sabbath" was observed not only by Israel, but by the land itself (Lev 25:2). Here the land is almost personified, as if it were living in a relationship with God, also under covenant obligations.

Deuteronomy 12:9 refers to the land as a place of rest for Israel, but it is also a place of rest for God, the place where God's presence dwells (Pss 95:11; 132:8).

Each of these themes underscores the same idea. This land is rightly called "holy land" because it belongs to a holy God (Num 35:34). This land is set apart. Other land is "unclean land" (Amos 7:17; see HOLY, HOLINESS, OT).

5. The prophets and the land

Deuteronomy 18:9-15 strongly links the appearance of prophets in Israel with Israel's possession of the land. This is because in the land where kings will rule, land will be seen as an object of conquest, even a commodity; therefore, royalty must be reminded that they stand in relation to the land not as property/heir, but as gift/recipient. For the prophets, land is a gift, a place where covenant-righteousness must be on display. Israel and its king needed to hold onto this perspective or risk loss of the land.

Isaiah sounds these warnings sharply: "Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land!" (Isa 5:8; compare Mic 2:1-2). Virtually each one of the prophets repeats the warning given by Elijah to Ahab: Murder and the misuse of land will be severely punished. This is true of Amos (4:1-2; 7:17), Hosea (9:2-3), and esp. Jeremiah (3:19-20; 7:5-7). For Jeremiah, the future of the nation's history is inevitable: It will lead to loss and exile. God will stir the king of Babylon to come against the land and devour it (25:8-9; 27:6).

Isaiah's famous "Song of the Vineyard" (Isa 5:1-7) outlines God's vision for the people in the land. They would be like vines planted in a carefully tended vineyard, and all that the owner asks is that the vineyard yield good grapes. But alas, Isaiah announces, the owner is filled with despair when the vineyard (that is, Israel and Judah) produces wild grapes (Isa 5:2b-4). The ultimate consequence for this unrighteousness, this covenant betrayal, was ultimate land loss: "I will remove its hedge and it will be devoured" (Isa 5:5).

This terror of land loss came to Judah in 586 BCE in the form of Babylonian armies. Psalm 48 recorded the pride and confidence of Israel's view of Jerusalem as a city established forever by God. Psalm 137 describes the shock and grief that swamped the nation when Babylonian infantry demolished Jerusalem's walls. The book of Lamentations wrestles with the confusion of the loss of promise, a loss that Israel had never imagined—that a life with Yahweh and a life in the land can come to an end (Hos 9:17).

But for the prophets, land loss became an avenue to renewal. Land loss is the necessary experience so that true obedience within the covenant can be reclaimed. In a word, those exiled from the land will become the new heirs; therefore, the prophets also point to a RESTORATION of land (Isa 11:10-16; Jer 16:15; Hos 2:23 [Heb. 2:25]; 11:8-11; Amos 9:14-15). Following the EXILE, a second entry to the land, almost a second exodus, brings Israel back to the land promise to reforge covenant faithfulness a second time (Isa 43:1-7; 49:8-21; 51:9-11). Once again, for prophets such as Ezekiel and Malachi, land inheritance, covenant, and faithfulness must run together.

B. Early Judaism

The theme of the land does not decline in importance in the cents. following the exile. Particularly with the dispersion of Jews throughout the Mediterranean seaboard in the Hellenistic era, Judaism wrestled with the centrality of "the land" for faith and practice.

During this period, the land continued to enjoy generous praise as a land more precious than any other, extensive and beautiful, pleasant and glorious, promised to those who are faithful. The Psalms of Solomon summarize the work of the coming messiah thus: "He shall gather together a holy people whom he will lead in righteousness; and he shall distribute them according to their tribes upon the land. And the alien and the foreigner will no longer live with them" (17:26-28). The rabbis simply cannot separate fidelity to the law and life in the land, as may be attested richly from the Mishnah: "There are ten degrees of holiness. The land of Israel is holier than any other land. Wherein lies its holiness? In that from it they may bring [offerings of] the sheaf, the first fuits, and the two loaves, which they may not bring from any other land" (m. Kelim 1:6). In the 1st cent. ce "Eighteen Benedictions," numbers 14, 16, and 18 emphasize that devotion to the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem is necessary for faith. In a commentary on Num 34:2, we learn about correct blessings during meals: "Of all the blessings there is none more precious than the one, 'For the land and for the food . . .' The Holy One, blessed be He, said, 'The land of Israel is more precious to me than everything' " (Num. Rab. 23:7).

Of course, DIASPORA Judaism that had put down roots in faraway places like Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome might have sorely disagreed with this exclusive claim on the "promised land." This culturally liberal approach to Jewish life is directly connected to the anxiety felt about the effects of Hellenization on Judaism. Nevertheless, despite the freedom desired by those living away from the land, the liturgies of Judaism and the history of its faith pulled Jews back to Jerusalem and the land of promise. Burial sites of Hellenistic Jews in Israel bear eloquent testimony to Jews who, despite living across the Mediterranean, desired to be buried in the land (see JERUSALEM; TEMPLE, JERUSALEM).

C. The New Testament

1. Overview

The LXX translated both Hebrew terms ʾerets and ʾadhamah with the Greek word̄ ge. This is also the most common word for land in the NT (250x). Two other terms, agros and chōra, also may refer to the land. Agros refers to land with reference to its agricultural or topographical features (e.g., a field, | Matt 6:28; 13:31) and the second to a political region (e.g., Matt 2:12).

Discussion about the land was prominent in the 1st cent. ce. Because matters of widespread public debate require merely the barest allusion to make themselves understood, the NT includes more references to the land than are obvious at first reading. In addition, the subject of land was a volatile topic because it was closely tied to Jewish desires for emancipation from Roman rule. What we today might term "religious nationalism" turned on the question of Israel's belief that Israel had a rightful and exclusive claim on promised land that ought to exclude Gentiles (particularly Romans). Veiled tests came to Jesus, no doubt with some frequency. The question, e.g., about tax payments to Caesar likely masked a deeper question about his willingness to resist Roman authority, which could lead next to affirmations about Jewish national aspiration based on land (Mark 12:14-17).

The NT touches on the subject deftly but moves its interests elsewhere. For NT theology, land as place, as geographical space, is no longer an interest of the kingdom of God. The covenant promise that Israel associated with the land becomes, in the NT, something that can be found in Christ.

2. Synoptic Gospels

Jewish interest in the land was only exceeded by Jewish interest in Jerusalem and the Temple, yet throughout Jesus' ministry, he discovers faith and reveals his glory consistently in "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Matt 4:15). The Synoptic Gospels have a "geographical theology" that portrays Galilee as a new "holy land." Even though Jesus, a faithful Jew, was presented at the Temple as an infant (Luke 2:22-24), journeyed there as a youth (Luke 2:41-49), and taught there as an adult (Luke 19:47-48), he stated that the Temple required cleansing, not celebration (Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-46). He proclaims that Jerusalem is a city that kills the prophets (Matt 23:37; see 21:33-41). In all the Gospels, Jesus' approach to the city is tied to his ultimate doom at the hands of the Temple authorities and Roman government. This general attitude that the Gospels take toward the place so central to Jewish consciousness provides a hint of something different about Jesus' ministry. Rather than affirm the national dreams to reclaim the land and cleanse it, he instead announces that armies would come and destroy it (Matt 24:1-2; Luke 21:20).

Jesus' teaching about the kingdom certainly provided every opportunity for him to refer to the land of promise. Was this not an eschatological kingdom? Did it not include the promises of Israel's ancestry? Even following his death, his followers seemed to despair that he did not "redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21), and, after the resurrection, they wondered if in his glory he would not begin the task (Acts 1:6). They were thinking about political restoration, but Jesus' kingdom was making a claim not on land per se, but on the lives of men and women in every land. Jesus certainly knows the prophetic critique of Israel's territorial theology. His parable of the vineyard (Mark 12:1-11) closely echoes Isaiah's Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1-7; compare Ps 80:8, 14). In Jesus' version, the residents of the vineyard meet the owner's son and remark, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours" (Mark 12:7). "Inheritance" was a code for the land of promise. But rather than gaining land, the story ends with the loss of land. Just as Isaiah proclaimed the destruction of the vineyard, Jesus proclaimed the return of the vineyard owner who would destroy it and "give it to others" (Mark 12:9). Jesus has gone one step beyond Isaiah. Not only will the land be lost, but it will gain new occupants. This shocking idea parallels Jesus' typical "reversal" tactics in his teaching. The first will be last, the last first; the rich become poor; and those who grasp after land will lose it.

Jesus himself illustrated this theme in his own life. He himself apparently had no land: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). His kingdom had no territorial dimension. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes an explicit reference to the land when he says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land (gē)." (Matt 5:5, author's translation). Here he is likely referring to Ps 37:11, where the reference is clearly to land. In other words, neither ethnicity nor struggle nor ancestral right will gain the land, but it will be received by those who are humble. When a man comes to Jesus with a legal dispute about "dividing the inheritance" (Luke 12:13-15), we can imagine that this has to do with land. But Jesus points away from such arguments, suggesting that his kingdom has little to do with territorial squabbles.

3. Gospel of John

If the Synoptic Gospels show Jesus challenging the popular understanding of land, inheritance, and nation, John probes yet another dimension of the NT answer. In this Gospel, Jesus spiritualizes the

promise of the land. Rather than pointing to the sanctity of the Temple, Jesus himself becomes the locus of holy space. In the OT, one aim of the covenant was the land of promise; in the Fourth Gospel, the aim is Jesus Christ, who walked in the land.

In a number of texts, Jesus is compared with the religious benefits of the land. He visits the Temple, and we learn that his body is a new Temple (2:21-22). Holy places like Bethel or Jacob's well now find that Christ duplicates and overwhelms what they offer (1:51; 4:10). Sacred healing pools like Bethzatha can offer little by comparison (5:1-9). In Jesus' conversation with the woman in Samaria, he makes a startling claim: Neither Mount Gerizim nor Mount Zion will be the places of true worship. Such worship can only happen in "spirit and in truth" (4:24). He negates Jerusalem as easily as he negates Samaria. Jesus is working with an entirely different concept of what it means to be located with God. For him, ancestral boundary markers, land as place, are gone.

During his final Passover meal, Jesus gives a telling indirect remark about land and place. The disciples worry about his departure and he reassures them that he is going ahead of them in order to prepare a place for them: "In my father's house are many dwelling places" (monē μονή; John 14:2). This term was used in Judaism to refer to the place of promise, namely the land of Israel. Later in the same chapter, Jesus assures them again. Place is redefined not as a dwelling in land, but as an indwelling of the Father and the Son within the believer: "We will come to them and make our home (monē) with them" (14:23). Spiritual identity is no longer fixed to location; identity has shifted from land as geography to interior space with Christ.

In chap. 15, Jesus employs the famed vineyard metaphor, but, unlike its synoptic use, here Jesus turns the metaphor into something completely new. The people of God cannot claim to be vines planted in the land and struggle to anchor their identity there. The vineyard now has one vine—Jesus Christ—and the question is no longer about being planted in the soil of the land, but being grafted into Jesus. Jesus is the source, the locale where divine life may be appropriated.

John shows Jesus displacing holy space: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). We might say that John "christifies" holy space. It is only in Christ where the glory of God may be found—not the Temple nor the land. The promised land here is rejected as the aim of faith, land is spiritualized to mean something else, and the promises of land, Temple, and festival are all refocused in Jesus.

4. The church

In the theology of the early church, two seminal ideas are at work. First, spiritual attachment to Jerusalem and the land of Israel is eroding. The domain of God's activity is no longer fixed on the territorial dimensions of Jewish life, but instead is focused on Christ in whom the covenant promises are fulfilled. Stephen's lengthy speech in Acts 7, shaped no doubt by Diaspora Jewish thinking, questions the exclusivity of Judaism's territorial claims for the Temple and the land, themes to which Stephen refers six times. The implications of this are so unsettling to his audience that Stephen is immediately killed (Acts 7:54-60). Some scholars suggest that the book of Acts may have even been modeled on the book of Joshua (e.g., Achan's fate parallels that of Ananias and Sapphira; compare Josh 7; Acts 5:1-11). The story of the Israelites taking over Canaan then pars. the church bringing the gospel to the nations. If this is the case, then "the land" parallels "the world" for Christian thought.

Second, the spiritual identity of God's people and their location is being redefined. Children of Abraham are those who exhibit faith in Christ, not those who possess an ethnic identity or a national attachment. This means that the territorial aspirations of ethnic Israel no longer resonate with the church. The church

must move to new lands, extending its ministry across the Mediterranean, indeed as far as Rome. For Paul, the promise to Abraham is no longer simply referring to Canaan, that is, geography defended in the ancestral traditions, but it now refers to the faithful descendants of Abraham who may use Abraham's promise to make claims on the entire world (kosmos [κόσμος]; Rom 4:13). The same note is sounded in Hebrews: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived as foreigners in the land (11:8); they and other OT models of faith "desire[d] a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Heb 11:16). They no longer seek "holy land," as their territorial commitments have now entirely evaporated.

New Testament thinking is not constrained by the territorial geography of the OT framework. It did not look for the national restoration of Israel. In Rom 9:4, e.g., when Paul lists Israel's privileges, it is striking that he fails to mention the "promise of land." In Rom 15:8-9, he refers to the promises to the ancestors but again fails to exploit themes about the land. Rather, the church sought the growth of Christ's kingdom, which, in this framework, includes every land and people.

5. A New Testament theology of land

What is striking about the NT is its discontinuity with the OT. In its theology of land, the NT reinterprets or perhaps reverses a central tenet of the OT. It offers a new theological reality in place of traditional land; it redefines holy space as being in Christ.

Moreover, land loss is suddenly a way to understand the work of God in a way not seen before. In this, we may hear an echo of the OT prophets. What appears to be failure and loss—exile—is now realized as a gift. This loss is ultimately the cross. Theologians have seen in the cross the ultimate paradigm of loss, and in the resurrection the ultimate paradigm of gift. The struggle to retain, control, and consume land and to find a divine justification in religious nationalism are replaced in the NT by a kingdom that, while intrinsically landless, claims to offer more than promised land ever could and can make a claim on every land as belonging to God.

Nevertheless, Christians continue to live in land and to recognize the importance of place for ongoing life—even though this land is given redefinition. Here is where the voice of the OT continues to influence Christian belief: The moral objections and instructions of the prophets now may speak to every land because in NT thought, every land is land claimed by God. See COVENANT, OT AND NT; ISRAEL, GEOGRAPHY OF; ISRAEL, HISTORY OF; KINGDOM OF GOD, KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

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GARY M. BURGE

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<u>LIFE</u> [בָּשָׂר basar, חַיִּים khayyim, נֶפֶשׁ nefesh, רוּחַ ruakh; βίος bios, ζωή zoē, ψυχή psychē]. Life is the fundamental gift shared between God and creation. Life is not an inherent quality possessed independently by us; it is a gift, first given in creation and then again in redemption. Without God, the cosmos would be void and lifeless; without God sinful creatures would be unable to sustain life as God intends. God gives life and the sole possibility that it might be eternal.

The biblical view of life has a variety of distinguishing features. It opposes, for instance, the notion that life is simply a by-product of nature, that life is native to all creatureliness—that God is incidental to it and nature can take care of itself without God. God creates the world and God endows the world with life, something the world cannot produce on its own. The breath of life is God's gift (Gen 1:30).

On the other hand, the biblical view also opposes the dualistic notion that the natural and spiritual worlds may be separated, that there is a divinely given life quite apart from CREATION. Life is always anchored to our existence as creatures. Life is found within creation, not apart from it, and life never seeks an escape from the limits of creation (see GNOSTICISM). Thus in Gen 2:7 the first human, ADAM, was formed from the earth, and then God breathed into his nostrils "the breath of life" making him "a living being." Christ, the second Adam, models this most fully in his incarnation and resurrection: he is truly born (and so belongs to creation), he truly dies (1 John 5:6), and when raised, he is raised in union with his body (1 Cor 15:12-58).

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Bibliography

A. The Old Testament

1. Overview

The Hebrew vocabulary for life centers on khayah (חָיָה, and its word group). It describes something that is not inanimate (rock) or dead (Ezek 1:5). It refers to a person's temporal existence (Gen 5:3) at a minimum, but more, it is applied to the duration of a person's experience under God, as in the sentence "They lived good lives." Modern speech might contrast the ideas thus: "I do not want merely to live; I want a life." Khayah describes not merely our ability to move and breathe and think, but the character or outcome of what we do with our existence. Hebrew thought was less interested in the origins of life or

the physiology of being than it was in the totality of the living experience. Having a life or learning how to live meant that “life” was a topic for ethics, not biology.

Hebrew nefesh is often translated SOUL, but this runs the danger of presenting Hebrew conceptions of life as a material, lifeless body now animated by nefesh. The term rather gets at the totality of the living person. Nefesh is lost in death (Job 11:20; Jer 15:9). Nefesh is breathed out or poured out at death Jer 15:9; Isa 53:12). This refers not to the loss of a component of someone’s life (such as “her soul went to heaven”) but rather to the conclusion of a person’s existence (such as “his life is over”). Nefesh is that which is characteristically us, something that keeps us not simply alive, but thinking, feeling, praying, and being. It is nefesh that makes us recognizable to one another despite age and infirmity.

Another term used to describe this animating dimension of life is spirit (ruakh). This too is lost at death (Gen 25:8; 49:33; Job 3:11) and it also gets at what makes humans alive, vital, moving. Ruakh is a versatile word that also describes the wind (Gen 1:2) and breath (Gen 7:15), as well as the living movement of God.

On occasion life can be referred to as “flesh” (basar, Gen 6:3). But there is no hint of dualism in this. Life is not flesh occupied by spirit. Flesh simply reminds us that life is lived within creation and its limits. It is physical—even perishable. On the ark, the animals who join Noah come aboard “two of all flesh” (Gen 7:15-16). And the flood itself destroyed all “flesh,” meaning all persons who have no place of refuge (Gen 6:17). In this case it is not simply “flesh” but “flesh in which there is the breath/spirit (ruakh) of life (khayyim).” This verse aligns the list of terms assigned in Hebrew to depict human existence.

With this in mind, it is clear why the OT scorned idolatry. Idolatry is not merely a denial of the God of Israel; it is folly. It is devotion to a device, a creaturely thing, in which there is no life. All those things that make God unique—but primarily God’s genuine existence—are absent in idols.

2. Life and the body

However, the Hebrews did give theological exploration to one aspect of the human body. When people die, their HEART (lev סְפֹּלַב) stops beating. Their blood stops moving. Therefore the Hebrews explained that life was located in blood (Lev 17:11) and that the center of life was found in the heart. The heart, the locus of nefesh, is the seat of human will and affections (Gen 34:8; Ps 51:12). Thus when we speak, we speak “from our hearts” (Gen 24:45); when we are glad, we are glad in “our hearts” (Exod 4:14). Pharaoh’s heart is not simply hardened (Exod 7)—his life itself was fossilized in opposition to God.

Life found in blood further explains the prohibitions of the law. Rules surround any contact with blood since this is the unique province of God’s activity. Life is there and therefore blood cannot be treated as if it were commonplace. Blood cannot be consumed in the diet any more than life can be taken through murder. In the same manner, temple sacrifice is not simply the slaughter of an animal, but the “pouring out of blood” at the altar. This is not simply blood that leaves the bowl, but the life of the animal. Since blood and life are linked, any activity that involves blood alters a person’s ritual status (see CLEAN AND UNCLEAN; SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS).

3. The holiness of life

Since life is a divine gift, life is sacred and must not only be treated with caution but also revered. Even the individual does not have free reign with his or her own life since it belongs to God. A marker of the biblical notion of God's strict ownership of life is that life can be forfeit. The death penalty follows those crimes that God deems reprehensible. Judicial killing is not taking life from a person who has a right to it; it is, rather, God demanding back that gift which has been abused. The OT accommodates killing where it is deemed appropriate (war, defense), but wanton or unjustified killing is strictly prohibited in the sixth commandment (Exod 20:13; see CRIMES AND PUNISHMENT, OT and NT). Following the flood, humanity gained permission to kill animals for food (Gen 9:3); as a reminder of the preciousness of life, however, humans are warned, "Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood" (9:4).

The strongest language for such reprehensible taking of innocent life concerns the killing of children in sacrifice. The Ammonite god Molech promoted this abhorrent practice and it was prohibited to Israel (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5). In fact, those who participated in these practices forfeit their own lives. However, the cultic sacrifice of children persisted in Israel (2 Kgs 17:17; 21:6), which led to the exile of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria. The Psalms likewise condemn it: "They poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood" (106:38).

Prohibitions against SUICIDE (taking one's own life) are less clear although the Jewish and Christian theological traditions have both rejected it. The OT provides a number of accounts where persons chose to end their own lives (Abimelech, Judg 9:50-57; Samson, Judg 16:21-31; Saul, 1 Sam 31:1-7; Zimri, 1 Kgs 16:15-20). Oddly, no criticism appears in these stories. (In the NT, Judas' death in Matt 27:3-5 should likewise be considered suicide. The Apocrypha also tells of various suicides: 1 Macc 6:42-46; 2 Macc 14:37-46, etc.). However, theologians have no doubt rightly applied the sixth commandment to suicide: Taking any life without warrant is unjustified. They will point to exhortations such as Deut 30:19, where Moses calls Israel to choose life, or to Paul's exhortation in 1 Cor 6:19 reaffirming the idea that God's ownership of life is clear, and the Spirit is his reminder of a divine claim on individual lives.

4. God, life, and death

The prospect for humanity in the OT is for long life that in some manner reflects the life enjoyed by God. Human life was to be lived in constant fellowship with God who created it. However, the entry of sin into the world also introduced the prospect of death (Gen 3:17-19). Exclusion from the garden meant loss of that context and the loss of ongoing life (see DEATH, OT). Now, rather than a human made miraculously from dust and filled with God's breath, Adam is reminded, almost as if condemned, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return." Mortality, then, in biblical thought, is a consequence of sin because sin ruptures humanity's ability to share life with God. This idea is portrayed in the narrative of Gen 1–11 with the shrinking lives of its characters. Methuselah lived 969 years—but soon, Abraham will have a life whose length is much shorter (175 years, Gen 25:7).

The balance of the biblical narrative following Gen 1–11 ponders how a person might live a demonstrably better life, something approximating God's original design. Even though the presence of sin hampers this prospect, still, we are able to regain some of what has been lost. The aim in so much of the OT is to regain "a long life," meaning a life of such quality and goodness, it now has deep value. This hope is offered to those who pursue God and yearn to live in conformity to his will. Psalm 91

describes the position of such a person. They "dwell in the shelter of the Most High," they trust God, they see him as their refuge, they know his name, and they love him. As a result, God rewards them with long life and saves them from the struggles inherent in this life (see also Deut 30:11-16).

Another important answer is found in obedience to the law expressed in the covenant. God's participation with Israel after Egypt was meant to bring life and blessing to his people. "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity" (Deut 30:15). If the people obey the covenant, love the Lord their God, and walk in his ways, they will prosper and flourish in their promised land. When they arrive in Canaan, Joshua's covenant renewal ceremony dedicates two theological monuments in the land: the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim (Josh 8). The first reminds Israel of the dire consequences that will come from disobedience; the latter points to the rich blessings that will follow fidelity to the covenant. Psalm 119 is an eloquent cry from one who yearns for this faithfulness. This is a person who yearns to walk in God's law, seek God with his or her heart, and keep every precept diligently. Such faithfulness will gain life, a good life that can be lived together with God.

5. The individual life

The OT does not entertain the idea that life is accidental. Psalm 139 outlines the intimate commitment God makes to every life even before it is born. "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know 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 beheld my unformed substance" (139:14-16; compare Job 10:11; Ps 119:73). This not only underscores the value of life since each life is another creation of God but it also means that life can have purpose. God has brought a life into the world for a reason.

The Israelite notion is not life lived in isolation. The life lived under God is a life lived in community: with the tribe, but more, with the community of God's people. I am because we are; I live because I am connected to others who live with me. Salvation, blessing, prosperity, and hope are all gained corporately. When God judges Israel (or any other nation), it is because the nation has fallen and each person is responsible for its welfare.

Nor is life something that is measured by the sum total of material things accumulated by a person. One cannot look at personal prosperity and say, "This is the good life." The external measurements of blessedness are less important than the inward blessing of knowing God. Thus when David was in the wilderness running from Saul, when all his hope for material life was gone and he only possessed memories of Jerusalem and its glory, he could pray that God's love was far better than life itself (Ps 63:3).

The OT is candid about the frailty of a person's life. Mortality (seen in suffering and death) encroaches on the life of the faithful and the unfaithful alike. Life slips from our hands no matter how much we grasp it. It is like a dream (Job 20:8), a shadow (Ps 39:6), a breath (Job 7:7), a cloud (Job 7:9), a mist (Job 7:16), grass that withers (Ps 102:11), or a flower (Isa 40:6). In some cases it seems that an early death is a result of sin. "The fear of the Lord prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short" (Prov 10:27). But this is not always the case. The Lord also knows the duration of our life and has measured it in advance (Ps 139:16).

6. The wise life

The wisdom literature makes yet one more contribution to the Israelite concept of life. These books—particularly Proverbs and Ecclesiastes—suggest that in this world there is much to be gained about how to live purposefully. Here we have not only the full exposure of the vain pursuits of life in this world but also an assortment of sayings that tell us how to manage ourselves with intelligence. But this is not a natural "theology" set apart from a revealed faith. Proverbs 1:7 remarks that wisdom begins with "the fear of the Lord." Religious affection, piety, or faith are thus the principal gateway to wisdom.

What does life in this world need? It requires practical guidance on avoiding evil, preserving a good name, managing anger, avoiding fools, and living righteously in business. Life in this world needs to be mentored in the pragmatic lessons gained through our ancestors: we want to promote humility and not pride, generosity and not greed, patience not violence, forgiveness not revenge, charity not bitterness, and a teachable heart rather than a stiff neck. Wisdom understands that deeply held piety without concrete guidance about "an honest scale" and "an honest tongue" will lead to a life of ruin (see WISDOM IN THE OT).

7. Eternal life

Life is the concern of this present world where obedient choices are made under God's covenant. And of course death cuts us off from the living community we have known in the world (Pss 6:5; 30:9; 88:11-12). But there is also a hint—unformed perhaps—that there will be a reunion with God and those we love after death. For some scholars, the notion of an afterlife was unknown in the OT. Others see more. Job declares remarkable confidence about his future after death: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19:25-27). At the very least, this implies that the nefesh of a person survives into another place (likely Sheol).

The notion of resurrection life is represented in Dan 12:2 where we learn that "many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (see also Job 14:12-14; Pss 16:10; 49:15). This is an extension of the idea that reward and blessing will follow those who live righteously—even beyond the grave. However, the full development of this idea will have to await a later period (see AFTERLIFE; DEAD, ABODE OF THE; RESURRECTION, OT).

B. Second Temple Judaism

Second Temple Judaism continued its interest in the wisdom needed to live a long and rewarding life (Sir 31:20; Tob 8:17; Bar 3:14). And while its vocabulary changes to Greek (the LXX generally uses zoē now for the khayah word group), one theme is prominent: Wisdom is the primary expression of the spirit of God. "For she [wisdom] is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty . . . she is a reflection of eternal light. . . . For God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom" (Wis 7:25-28).

However, this era was a time of oppression and suffering for Israel. Martyrdom was common. Therefore a shift occurs from the experience of life in this world to life in the world to come. A good example occurs in 2 Macc 7:9 during a dramatic martyrdom story. While one of seven brothers is tortured, he cries out to the Greek tormentor, "You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the

King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws.” The experience of this life is thus provisional, and obedience even amid torture will lead to a blessed life hereafter.

The conscious development of this thought can be seen in 4 Macc 18. The writer cites Prov 3 and Ezek 37 as proof of eternal life: “There is a tree of life for those who do his will” and “Shall these dry bones live?” Rabbinic Judaism made the same use of Deut 32:39, “I kill and I make alive.” In most cases, a future life is directly linked to a life of obedience to the law.

However, widespread popular belief in an afterlife seems limited. Early Jewish burial inscriptions refer to life but only with reference to the quality of the life of the deceased. But by the 2nd or 3rd cent. ce, Jewish belief in life beyond the grave was common.

C. The New Testament

1. Overview

The NT vocabulary for life includes zoē, psychē, and bios. Zoē is the leading term (135 times in the NT; its verb, zaō [ζάω], occurs 140 times). Although each of the words is distributed throughout the NT, they occur most frequently in the writings of John and Paul.

Most themes from the OT appear here. Life refers to the natural experience of living in this world, which is precious and unique (Mark 8:37). Jesus’ work of healing protects and preserves life (Mark 5:23). Even when he raises a person from death (e.g., Lazarus, John 11), he does so in order that the person might regain such life.

The NT also understands that life is transient and fleeting. “Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes”

(Jas 4:14). We cannot expand our life through any manipulations (Matt 6:27) and we must genuinely count on God to take care of the practical necessities that sustain us (Matt 6:25).

The NT concentrates, however, on the character of life with God. This theme is sounded by Jesus during his temptation when he cites Deut 8:3 in Matt 4:4: “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Hence, life cannot be formed on earth as it was intended without a profound reference to God. God alone is creator and sustainer of life (Acts 17:25; Rom 4:17) because he is the one God who is truly and completely alive. God is “the living God”

(Matt 16:16; 26:63), which means he takes care of all matters that pertain to life.

But the NT also reflects the lively debate about the afterlife among Jewish leaders. When challenged about the nature of marriage in the afterlife, Jesus expressed himself without reservation that his audience simply did not understand the power of God. “As for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is God not of the dead, but of the living” (Matt 22:31-32). His logic is simple. If God continues to be the God of Abraham, Abraham must be alive.

2. Synoptic Gospels

In the first three Gospels most of the references to life belong to Jesus. In many cases, the use is a commonplace reference to mere existence, such as Luke 12:20 when the rich fool is told, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you" (compare Mark 3:4). When Jesus speaks of his own mission he sees his death as primary to his work: "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

But the central question in Jesus' synoptic teachings probes what it means to have a good life, a life that is satisfying and free of anxiety, a life lived out in relation to God. For instance, any life that is measured by the sheer number of its accumulated possessions is no life at all. "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15). Wisdom gives guidance and a life without guidance is a life at risk.

This outlook reflects Jesus' use of Judaism's wisdom tradition that affirms the "two ways" that are set before every human. A choice must be made, a road chosen, and pitfalls must be avoided in order to gain this life (Prov 8:20; 9:6; 12:15; 16:25; compare Pirqe Avot 2:12). A good life—not mere living, but a life worth celebrating—is something that must be pursued, but few find it because "the gate is narrow" (Matt 7:14). Something must be given up, there must be loss, in order for there to be discovery and a breakthrough. "Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it" (Matt 10:39). Jesus portrays this sense of renunciation dramatically in Luke 14:26 when he says that a person must even hate both his family and his own life to truly find this life. This is no doubt an example of hyperbole used for effect but the point is made: A profound life is elusive and comes to us only following a dramatic choice.

Jesus' many kingdom parables refer to surprise. When the great pearl is found, everything must be sold to gain it. When the treasure is uncovered in the field, all is sold to gain the one thing of importance (Matt 13:44-45). Thus things must be lost for other things to be gained. Luke's story of the prodigal (Luke 15) illustrates the principle well. Technically the younger son is alive in the far country living with Gentiles—but in reality he is "dead." He is only "alive" when he recognizes what he has done, repents, and returns to the father he originally offended. Christians too readily view these parables as metaphors for "eternal life." The found pearl includes this but it is more: It is the discovery of the "kingdom," which Jesus sees as something we may encounter even now.

Jesus is concerned about life in eternity. However, this contrasts sharply with the Hellenistic idea of the immortality of the soul. Eternal life is a gift from God "who raises the dead" (Matt 22:31). There is also an intimate link between our life on earth and the prospect of this eternal gift. Our life with God now controls our destiny for eternity (Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25). When he is asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17), Jesus responds by pointing to the law (10:19). One must live righteously to inherit eternal life (Matt 25:46). But when the inquirer says that he has fulfilled the law, Jesus probes the one thing that has control of this man's heart—his wealth. Eternal life is not merely a concern of legal obedience, it is a matter of the heart's affections.

3. John

John's Gospel has a marked interest in life and refers to it more frequently than any synoptic Gospel. The Greek term psychē refers to the common life on earth that is lost at death (John 10:11, 15, 17; 12:25, 27; 13:37-38; 15:13). John's specialized treatment of life is found in his remarkable attention to the term zoē (over fifty times). The Synoptics point to wisdom's pursuit of the good life or they talk

about eternal life as something enjoyed after death. But John describes the possibility that an eschatological life, a life with all the hallmarks of the coming age, can be a reality now. He does not deny the truth of a future life in eternity (John 5:29; 12:25) but he does say that eternal life is a present possession (John 5:24). The hour has now dawned when worship in spirit and truth can be realized (John 4:23). Living water, water that is linked to eternity (John 4:14), is now offered to the Samaritan woman (John 4:10-11). Living bread, bread that descends from heaven, is now available for the world to consume (John 6:33-35). Belief in the present age is the key to attaining this life. “Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life” (John 6:47).

The first reference to life in John occurs in 1:4: “In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.” John opens the Gospel by explaining that the Word had lived in eternity with God; and therefore he brought this divine life of God into the incarnation. As God brought life to the world in creation, so now the incarnate Word, Jesus, would bring new life in this re-creation. He therefore is “true life,” which John’s first letter makes explicit: “And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). Thus to appropriate Jesus Christ—or in the eucharistic metaphor of “eating him”—will gain the life that is contained within him (John 6:57). His presence in the world, his offering of himself through the giving of his word—these extend to the world divine life (John 6:68; 10:28; 12:50; 17:2). In a word, life in John is entirely christocentric (see CHRISTOLOGY). Jesus is “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). Christ bears divine life to the world, and he alone is the source for humanity’s life. In his final prayer, Jesus gives his summary description of this process: “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

But simply acknowledging that God’s divine life is present in the world through Christ is not enough. Faith is the means by which this divine life is appropriated (John 6:40, 47; 1 John 5:12). And when this faith appropriates life, genuine love is the evidence: “We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death” (1 John 3:14).

If eternal life is something now lived by Christ’s disciples, then what does the future hold? Believers no longer need to worry about judgment since the outcome of that day is already assured (John 5:24). Life in eternity is simply a continuation of the divine life found here, but more, life in eternity will give something that we cannot have here: a glimpse of Christ’s true glory in the heavenly realm from which he came (John 17:24).

4. Paul

In one respect, Paul’s understanding of life parallels the views of John. Humanity can be divided into two groups: those who are alive in nature (but who are spiritually dead) and those who through belief in Christ have been brought to life (Eph 2:1). In 1 Cor 15 Paul contrasts these two positions by referring to Adam and Christ. Adam, as head of the human race, presides over a people defined and formed by death. Adam’s sin brought death to all: “in Adam all die” (1 Cor 15:22a). And to remain “in Adam” is to remain in such death. However, “in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Cor 15:22b; Rom 5:12). This is the new prospect for humanity. Christ, in his resurrection, brings the possibility of resurrection to Adam’s lineage. We are no longer bound to death (though we seem to live); we now may have genuine life that will last for eternity. Humans thus have one choice: to live in Adam or to live in Christ. And for Paul there is no choice for no life will ever be found “in Adam.”

Paul can refer to death "reigning" from Adam to Moses (Rom 5:14, 21), which means that "life" for Paul has now become a theological metaphor. Paul is less interested in the pragmatic issues of daily living than he is in the transformed life made possible through faith. Paul even looks back on his own conversion in these terms. His own life had been corrupted through sin and "this worked death in me" (Rom 7:12). In this sense, Paul was not truly alive until he met Christ. This then is the true condition of the world: left on its own, it is genuinely dead.

On the other hand, life can be gained only through (an ironic) burial. A person who is dead must be buried. Burial (seen in baptism) is a candid admission of the true state of affairs for human life. Union with Christ is union with his death; it is burial with him so that a new life might emerge from the tomb on the order of Christ's resurrection (Rom 6:1-4). Thus: "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom 6:5). Christ effectively defeated what plagues humanity by becoming human through his incarnation; as flesh he defeated sinful flesh (Rom 8:3). But if this is true—if he assumed our humanity in its totality—then in his resurrection, the benefits of his work can spill to all humanity. Christ can only save those whose nature he has fully assumed.

Living people have thus confessed that they were dead because of sin. But they are now alive thanks to the power that brought Christ from the grave and to the Spirit who now gives divine life to human life. "But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive 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 give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you" (Rom 8:10-11 RSV).

This is the center of Paul's understanding of the new life offered in Christ. "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor 5:17). Paul is not here talking about some new dimension of human experience in which sinful appetites are suppressed. This is not a human hope. Humanity does not need repair; it needs transformation. The new life in Paul is thus entirely eschatological. This is the powerful, intervening working of God as promised in the OT prophets. This is the "new thing" described by Isaiah in which wilderness is suddenly oasis (43:19). This is the new covenant of Jeremiah (31:31) or the new heart of Ezekiel (36:26). This is a work of God because no moral or religious project engineered by humanity has ever succeeded in addressing our deepest problems. This is the hope of divine in-breaking, of divine visitation, of discovering that God is with us to amend what is wrong.

No doubt 2 Cor 3:17 is a critical verse describing the new life and its connection to Christ and the Spirit. "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." It is important to keep in mind what Paul does not mean. Paul is not simply conflating the Spirit and Christ as if the resurrected Christ were now a part of an amorphous divine presence. Christ is not an inspiring force now at work in the world. Paul thinks of Jesus as having two forms of work: In his incarnation he truly entered our humanity and served among us. In his resurrection, he entered a realm of power in the Spirit. Therefore the spiritual power available to us is the power that was in Christ—it is the power of Christ. Thus Paul can refer to us being "in Christ" or "in the Spirit" freely. Christ indwells his followers powerfully through the Spirit. This is the source of new life.

But while Paul is committed to the powerful eschatological work of God in Christ, he is also concerned with the moral paradoxes of life in the Spirit. Those who are alive in Christ continue to live under the shadow of the old Adam. Those with faith are alive in an utterly new way and yet sin and mortality are still present. In other words, there is a struggle. One central work of the Spirit is setting in place a new

principle of life that will finally overcome the “law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2). And here is where the faithful find themselves at another crossroads: Finding life through “burial” with Christ was their first decision; they must now yield their life to the Spirit that is able to transform them. “To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace” (Rom 8:6). If the opposite of being in Adam is being in Christ, the opposite of being in the Spirit is being in the flesh. With the help of the Spirit, Christians must “set their minds” on things not related to this world, to Adam, or to sin (Col 3:2). This is not a pursuit of mysticism but a matured understanding of what has happened in Christ: a reality has changed, an ownership has shifted (Rom 6:15-23), a new marriage enjoined (Rom 7:1-6).

But Paul also introduces one more unexpected element. If life in Christ is gained by joining him in death, then in some manner, followers of Christ take on Christ by continuing to experience “death” in this world. Appropriating the death of Jesus is not merely a matter of conversion, it is a matter of transformed life. In 2 Cor 4:1-12 Paul describes the nature of his life to the Corinthians: His losses and deprivation, his persecution and suffering have not defeated him. Instead they have become opportunities in this world to “carry in the body the death of Jesus” so that “the life of Jesus might be evidenced in us” (2 Cor 4:10). The paradox of death-to-life first heard in Jesus’ words (those who are first, must be last) now becomes a signal feature of Christian living. “For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you” (4:11-12). For Paul the cross is not simply a place where Jesus died; it is also a metaphor for a divine principle that leads to transformation of life in this world. The death embraced in conversion is a death Christians continue to embrace in order to have the life of Christ come alive within them.

Thus Christians live in an interim period. Redemption and new life are realities, and yet there is another reality that is “hidden with Christ in God” (Col 3:3). Christ has abolished death and brought new life and immortality (2 Tim 1:10). Christians anticipate sharing fully in Christ’s glory someday (1 Cor 15:43; 2 Tim 2:10) but know that this glory is now hidden (Rom 8:35; Col 3:3-4). This experience of the fullness of Christ’s glory and the final perfection of divine life awaits the end of history or union with Christ in heaven.

5. The rest of the New Testament

The balance of the NT reaffirms the major motifs already established in John, Paul, and the Synoptics. Hebrews reaffirms the ongoing reality of Jesus’ heavenly life and our dependence on him for our hope of eternal life. The letters from Peter and James promote the importance of godliness in the Christian life and provide something akin to a Christian wisdom tradition. The letters of John sound again the themes of the Gospel but now with an eye on those who might deny the importance of the earthly life of Christ. Again and again John reinforces the idea that life can only be found in Christ, who is the self-revelation of God, and all other pursuits are futile. Finally, Revelation ties the word life to a series of descriptive nouns (breath of life, 11:11; tree of life, 22:2; crown of life, 2:10, etc.).

Both the OT and NT agree on central ideas about life. Life is a gift from God and without God, no life would be possible. However, humanity lives with a profound experience of death from which it cannot extricate itself. This does not refer simply to human mortality, but to the goodness of living as creatures with their creator. Throughout the Bible the only hope for recovery from this tragedy, the only possibility of resurrection from death—the only hope of restoration—comes from God. Themes of redemption are always tied to life because these are the works of God to save humanity. God intervenes in human history to restore life, to give humans life once more. See IMMORTALITY; IMMORTALITY

IN EARLY JUDAISM; RESURRECTION, EARLY JEWISH; RESURRECTION, NT; RESURRECTION, OT.

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